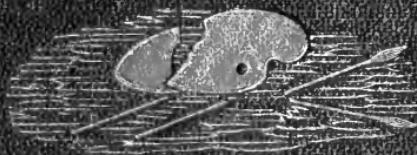




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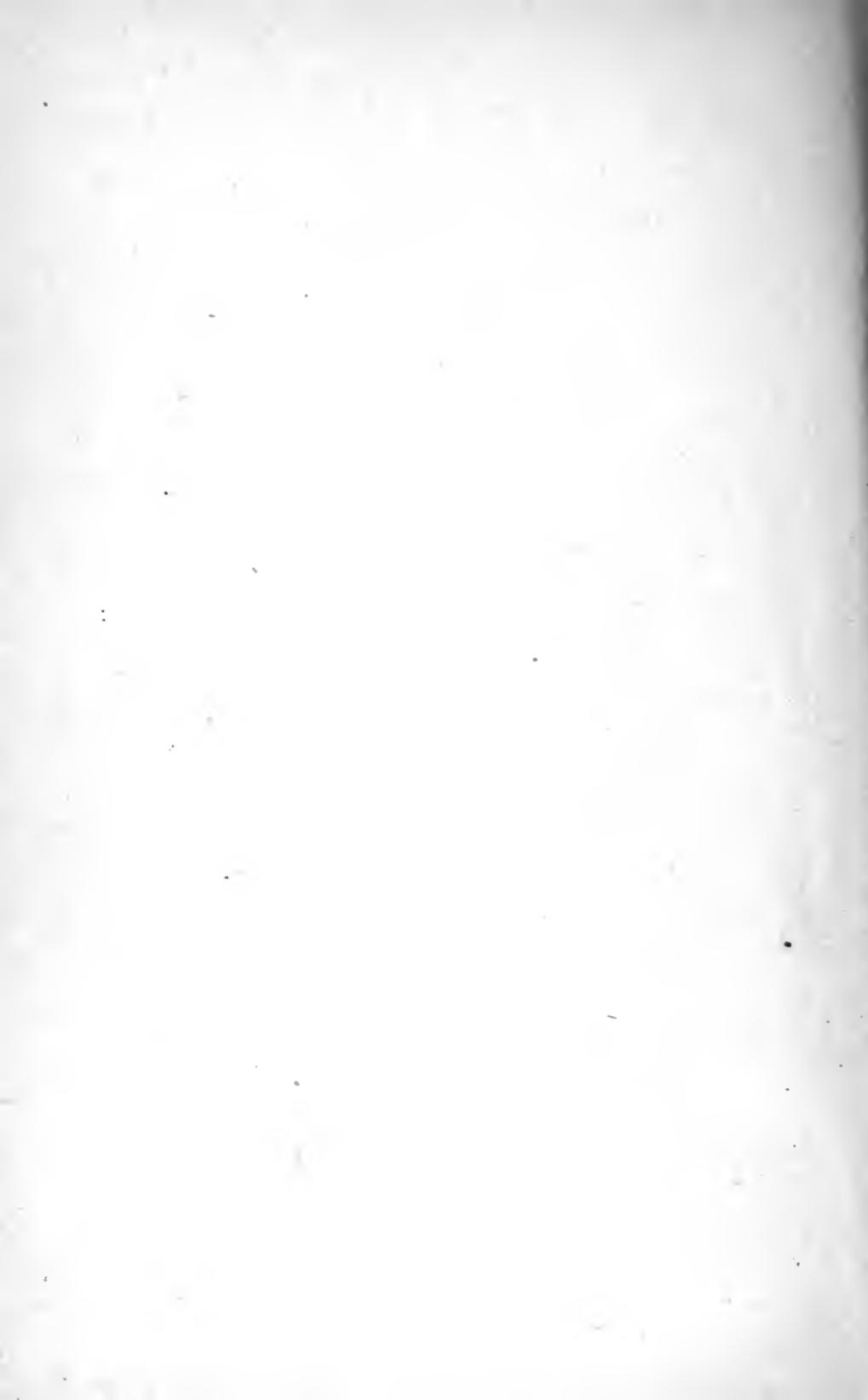


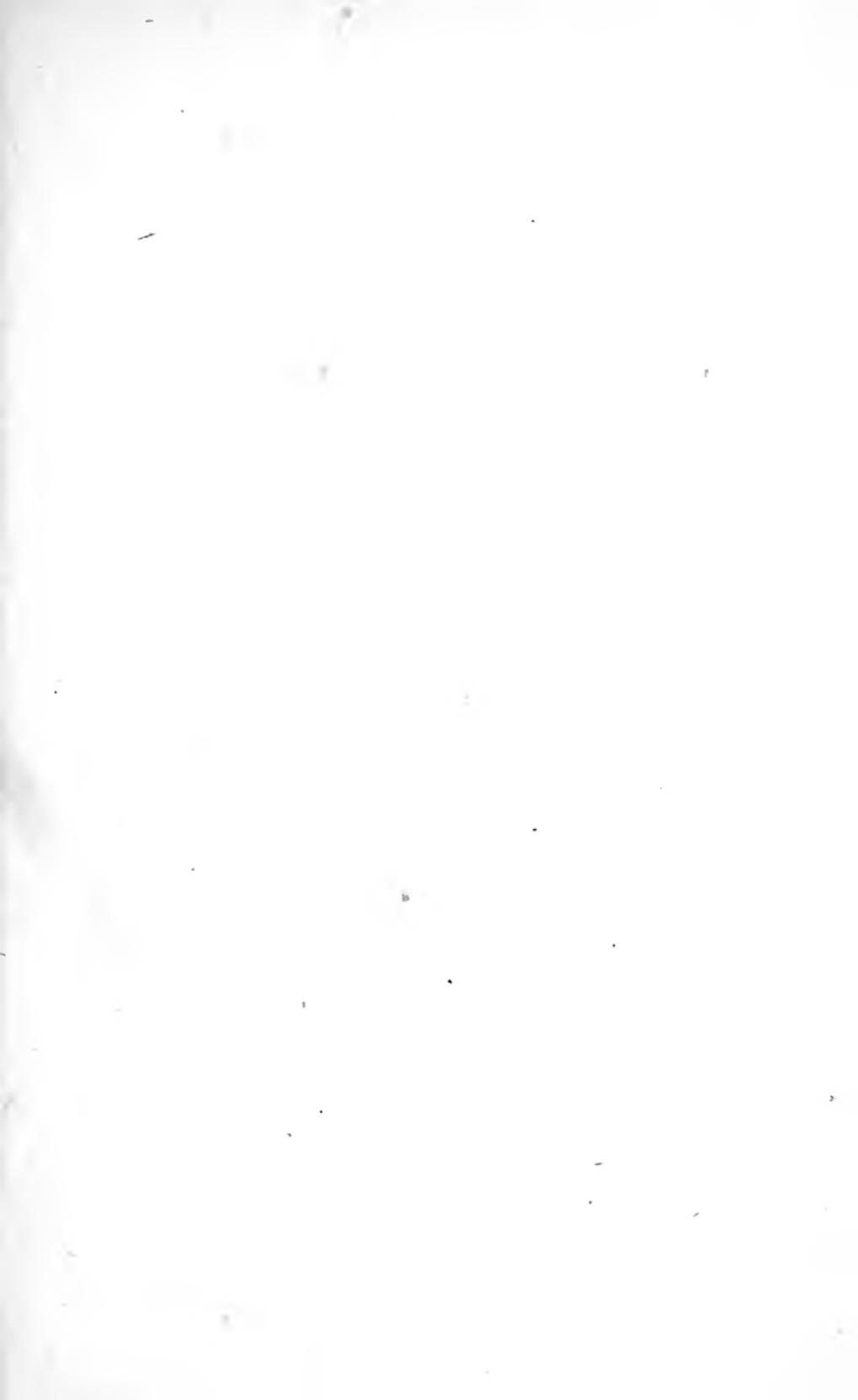
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A L I C E

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ALICE

OR

THE PAINTER'S STORY

BY

LAUGHTON OSBORN ✓

33

NEW YORK
DOOLADY PUBLISHER
448 BROOME STREET
1867



September 26th 1867
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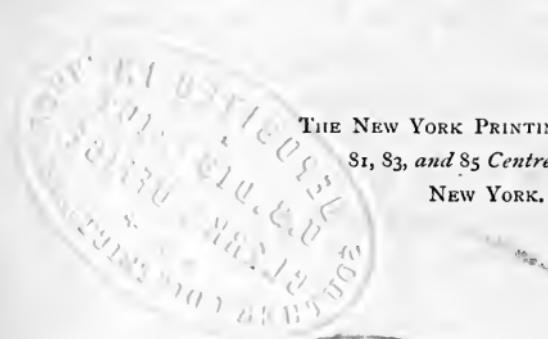
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81, 83, and 85 Centre Street,
NEW YORK.



ADVERTISEMENT

SOME months since, there appeared in the *New-York Times* a notice of Mr. Yates's novel, *Land at Last*. It showed a remarkable resemblance to exist between the chief incident in the groundwork of that story and the corresponding event in the first canto of *Alice*. I know nothing further, but am told by one to whom I confided the comparison between the two books, that this and the peculiar color of the heroine's eyes, identical in both and in both particularized, are the sole points of actual resemblance. But they are also important as they are noticeable ones. Now, *Alice* was commenced in London, March 6, 1852, and on the completion of the first part was tendered to Mr. Chapman, of Chapman & Hall, Piccadilly. In his answer, now before me, dated May 1, '52, he spoke of it favorably, "but as it was a tale thought it essential to see the whole before deciding." The second canto was commenced in Mannheim, the 17th of June succeeding, and finished in London, December 23, of the same year. But in the uncertainty of final acceptance I refused to write more, and the poem was declined. The two cantos then passed through the hands of Mr. Moxon of Bond-street. I believe they were also laid before other publishers in London; and at the same time a copy was made and

sent over to this country, was transcribed here by one of my brothers, and offered to Mr. Putnam. When I returned, three years afterward, I sent them on to Parry, McMillan & Co. of Philadelphia, who gave, like Mr. Chapman, a quasi-acceptance, enclosing amiably a flattering notice of their Reader, but, like the London publisher, exacted the completion of the poem, and required to see it so completed, before agreeing to undertake its publication. I was then engaged on one of the tragedies and refused to leave the greater work to occupy myself, perhaps fruitlessly, with the less. It was next submitted, in its incomplete state, to Ticknor & Fields (May '56), and, completed, to Phillips, Sampson & Co. (January '58), to Mr. Carleton, and I believe to the Harpers, and one or two others, and finally was undertaken in partnership by Mr. James Miller, and a specimen-page actually printed, when, owing to the times, the idea of publication was abandoned. All of this very long before "Land at Last" was announced even in London, and perhaps before it was designed.

The striking traits I have mentioned as similar in the two novels (for *Alice* belongs to that class of fiction, although it is in metre) are probably so only by coincidence. But while I am unwilling to believe that Mr. Yates, even if he had the opportunity, borrowed from me, I cannot afford to have it be supposed that I am indebted to him.

L. O.

INDEX OF THE SECTIONS

CHANT THE FIRST

	Page		Page
I. THE NOBLE COUPLE . . .	9	VI. THE SLEEPER . . .	35
II. THE LONELY ARTIST . . .	13	VII. THE WATCHER . . .	37
III. THE LITTLE BEGGAR . . .	18	VIII. THE ANGEL OF THE	
IV. THE DISGUISE	22	DAWN	41
V. THE FIRST PRAYER . . .	25		

CHANT THE SECOND

I. THE EXHIBITION	51	VII. THE TWO NARRA-	
II. THE SURPRISE	53	TIVES	74
III. THE DAWN OF FORTUNE	55	VIII. THE CELLAR-LODGING	81
IV. ALICE ALONE	60	IX. THE MOTHER	90
V. THE RECOGNITION . . .	64	X. THE FIRST SHOCK . .	96
VI. THE CONTEST OF GENE-		XI. THE LIGHT DEPARTED	103
ROSITY	67		

CHANT THE THIRD

I. THE REIGN OF THE ROSE	106	III. THE PAINTER'S PASSION	110
II. THE CHILD NOW WOMAN	108	IV. ITS RETURN	114

Page		Page	
V. THE REVELATION . . .	118	IX. THE PARTING . . .	137
VI. THE EYES OF JEALOUSY	121	X. THE FLIGHT . . .	144
VII. THE PORTRAIT . . .	124	XI. THE EXPLANATION . .	145
VIII. THE MODEL . . .	135	XII. REACTION . . .	152

CHANT THE FOURTH

I. THE SEASON OF THE VINE	164	XI. THE COURSE OF SIN	197
II. THE ENGLISH TOURISTS	165	XII. THE MINIATURE . . .	202
III. THE GIPSY	168	XIII. THE DEATH-BED CON-	
IV. THE FOOT-TRAVELERS	174	FESSİON	204
V. THE PLOT	175	XIV. THE CASTLE OF HEI-	
VI. THE DILEMMA	184	DELBERG	212
VII. THE AMBUSH	185	XV. THE STRUGGLE . . .	218
VIII. THE ATTACK	188	XVI. THE MIDNIGHT VISIT	225
IX. THE RESCUE	191	XVII. THE DEPARTING AN-	
X. THE RIVALS	194	GEL	229
		XVIII. THE BROKEN PENCILS	236

CONCLUSION 247

NOTES 255

CHANT THE FIRST

A L I C E

CHANT THE FIRST

I

The night was chilly — the winter rain
Drove slanting against the casement pane,
With a rush and a dash when the wind was high,
That moan'd in the cedars the castle by,
Fitfully with a querulous cry,
Then lull'd — then patter'd again.
Ah me, it was a sound most dreary
That wintry wind, on a night so chilly,
Through the boughs of the cedars piping shrilly!
It made the fire-light gleam more cheerly
In the carpeted, curtain'd and tapestry'd room
Where sat the Earl, as his fathers had done
That for five hundred years had come and gone,
Cushion'd on velvet trick'd out with gold,
While his foot press'd a rug from a Persian loom,
And about him, on three sides, its multiple fold

An Indian screen with figures bold,
Whose double was not to be bought or sold,
Threw its precious shelter, while bright and free
The beech logs burnt so merrily,
And all to keep out the cold.

The Earl was silent, but not alone.
A little apart, in another chair,
Sat a noble lady, exceeding fair,
With her face turn'd towards his own.
She heard not the wind with its wintry moan,
She mark'd not the fire that cheerily shone,
But gaz'd with a sweetly pensive air
On his downcast eyelids and brow of care,
Where, his left cheek leaning
On his left hand dejectedly,
The bent fingers screening
His eyes unaffectedly,
His knees half-bended and ancles cross'd,
He sat in an attitude
That suited him well,
But whither his mind went, whether 't was lost
In one theme of reflection,
Or roving with latitude
Yet with dejection,
Not the gazer might tell.

Wistful the beautiful lady awhile
Continu'd to gaze;

When sudden she sees — it was not a smile
Reveal'd by the blaze
That curv'd her lord's mouth, for the upper lip quivering
And his frame shivering
Betray'd an emotion painful and brief —
And hark to the sigh gives his bosom relief!

Charming unspeakably the ways
Of woman in her softer mood,
Ere yet the lapse of time decays
Her power of grace, though not of good,
For goodness, alas! loses half its charm
Without the adornment of outward form,
And sad it is very, yet true not less,
That pity and love, all emotions that bless
Both receiver and giver,
Lose power whenever
The face is less pliant the thoughts to express;
Nay, the tear-drops of anguish
Wrung from the rack'd heart
Speak not their true language
When age and long sorrow have play'd their rough part.
Fair was the Countess, as we have sung;
Smooth of cheek and soft of eye,
Graceful her form, though no longer young,
And oh, the tones of her silver tongue
Were the sweetest music that ever rung
On hearts that were yearning for sympathy!
And pleasant it was to see her there

Noiselessly glide to her husband's chair,
And, sitting down on a stool at his feet,
Lay her right hand with gesture sweet
On his own right hand which lay on his knee,
Looking up so appealingly,
In hopes his glance to meet.

The Earl felt those silky fingers warm,
The Earl look'd down on that graceful form,
And bending o'er her, his left hand laying
On the bewitchingly beautiful head,
His fingers playing
With her long tresses
Fine as the silkworm's or spider's thread,
And fair as a child's, like virgin gold shining
Where touch'd by the light,
His thoughts thus expresses,
Round his forefinger twining
The spires of a curl,—
“ 'T is eleven years, the day of this night,
Since we lost our dear girl.
Poor little thing! if alive, she may wander,
Hungry, half-clad, in this pitiless rain.
'T was this I did ponder,
And pondering shudder'd; and I shudder again.”

If the Earl thought but then and but thus of the
poor,
Blame him not.

'T was not of his nature, but the fault of his lot.
He believ'd what he heard ; he reliev'd, that was more ;
But hunger and nakedness pass'd not his door,
And unseen were forgot.

II

The night is chilly — the winter rain
Drives slanting against the high window pane,
Where an artist sits in his humble room,
With a seacoal fire to keep out the gloom
And the cold.

A faded carpet, a leathern chair,
A huge scroll sofa with cloth of hair,
A rug like the carpet the worse for wear,
Stuff curtains of scanty fold,
Behold the luxuries London gives
To lodgers who live as the artist lives !
Yet does he not complain.
He leans in his chair as the Earl is leaning,
His brow is full of a mournful meaning,
And he listens to the rain.

I would you could have seen him then,
With his elegant limbs so full of grace
And his soul-born majesty of face —
That air which singles from common men
The high in letters and high in art,

When Heaven hath added to wealth of mind
The worth of heart;
For the two together not always we find,
But rather apart:
And yet high virtue seems oftener given
To those whose genius is stamp'd of Heaven,
To the genuine bard and the true art-master
(They are almost one),
Than where it is of a groveling kind,
Or more truly none—
In the dauber and poetaster.
But I would you could have seen him there
Sitting even as the Earl was sitting,
The light of the seacoal fire flitting
Over his forehead and over his hair,
The shadowy room, his abstracted air,
And graceful posture his figure fitting,
In the old arm'd-chair.

But for him was no loving lady fair
To watch his mood,
Not even a hound on the rug to share
His solitude.
The plaster casts on the sideboard that stood,
Looking down with the stare
Of their eyeballs' inanity,
The layman that held out his fingers of wood
As in act of pray'r,
As the light glimmers over them

Or the dark shadows cover them.
Are nothing, yet none the less
Add to his loneliness
By their shape of humanity.

Ever, ever, ever alone !
Lonely as living thing may be,
At least of the living that man leaves free
Nor shuts up in walls of stone.
The moon in her full in a cloudless sky,
The last of a wreck that still floats at sea,
The single leaf on a winter tree,
Or the raven's nest on high,
Are lonely things, but not lonely as he,
This beating heart in a mighty town
With no other heart to beat to his own,
No other face to see
That should look upon his as on features known
With friendship or sympathy.

But not of his loneliness
Thought he thus leaning,
In the armchair reclin'd ;
His brow is dark with another meaning,
Of thoughts that are only less
Sad of their kind.
He thought of his mother far away,
Of his sisters that in the churchyard lay,
Of his labors that brought him nor glory nor pay,

And then he thought of the poor.
He went to the window and rais'd the blind.
The sky was black, the winter wind
Which had blown all day,
Though it swept not through forest nor over a moor,
But, in walls confin'd,
Through town-arch and city-gate
With a fury more mitigate
Drove on its way,
Now seem'd to be dying,
Moaning and sighing,
Fitful yet mild,
With the moan of a child
That is weary of crying
Yet sore with its pain,
While softer and smaller came down the chill rain.

He thought of the poor. 'T was the lonely hour
When the lonesome painter his lone walk took.
Four copper coins from his sideboard nook,
And from his thin purse a silver groat,
('T was the all in his power,)
He dropt in his well-worn outer coat,
And, elsewise prepar'd the rain to meet,
Sought the street.
Mock not his stinted alms! for no more
It cost him to dine from his slender store:
'T was as if the Earl had given away
A hundred pounds that blessed day.

Yet not more praise merited
The painter than peer.
Both had inherited
The good heart they abus'd not;
But if fortune had pour'd
In the Earl's cup of prosperity
Disappointment's asperity
Through a loss still deplor'd,
It yet had infus'd not
The bitter of fear;
While the painter, through wo, like the Tyrian queen,
Had grown large in charity,
And in the disparity
'Twixt fortune and merit that daily were seen
Found reason for dread —
At least so he thought —
That himself might be brought
To want one day for bread.
And then in his walks, turn him whither he would,
By day and by night,
The forms and appeal that he seldom withstood
Shock'd his sight,
Thrill'd his ear,
While the Earl, borne on in his stately coach,
Might pass them unheard without self-reproach,
For they came not near.

III

The night is chilly; the rain comes down
Soft and small, and aslant no more—
For the wind is dying.
So it beats not into the vaulted door,
Of a house in a street of the mighty town,
Where sits a young girl crying.
Crying — Ah me! the bitter night!
To see her sit there in so woful plight—
The shawl that scarce met her throat before
Of summer tissue, and flimsy light
The single garment whose folds alone
Shelter her limbs from the cold wet stone.

Poor child! not then,
In her limbs' weariness
And her heart's dreariness,
Felt she the chilly air,
Though from its influence
Strong and well-shelter'd men,
Shivering, hurry'd thence
To their repair.
What! could they pass her there,
Crouching, her face so fair
On her hands bent, all her limbs drawn together?
Indistinct was her form, yet the wet flags reflected,
Lit by the lamps, a dim light on her ancles bare

And the hands holding her wan face dejected.
But in that weather
None car'd to stop, and the passers were rare.

And now cease the footfalls. What shall she do ?
Whither to wander ?
This thought must she ponder
Over and over — but over in vain.
Black as the night that surrounded her grew
The despair of her spirit. Yet not in the pain
Of her heart's now uttermost desolation,
Wept she with bitter or loud lamentation.
By the cold and the rain
Her senses were numb.
Softly her tears fell and slowly, her groaning
Subdu'd to a murmur, and save that low moaning
Her anguish was dumb.

Hark to that tread ! 'T is the turn of her fate,
The night's blackest hour ere the morn shall awaken.
Slow steps the comer, approaching where sate,
Crouch'd like a hound, the poor houseless forsaken.
He pauses, and lo, he has heard her repining,
Has mark'd the hands lit by the wet flags shining,
And his heart aching
To see a young creature, so clad as she,
Sitting there in such misery,
With accents of sad sympathy
Thus questions her despair :

" My child, what ails you? And why sit you there?
Have you no home? Take this." The child extending

One little hand — not with avidity,
But a timidity
Full of sweet grace,
For the alms that was given, the giver, bending,
Removes the other that still was spread
Over her features, and, lifting the head,
Sees in the upturn'd imploring face
A beauty so touching, in kind so rare,
Though privation and care
On the young cheek had fed
And hollow'd the eyes,
As held him fix'd with delight and surprise.

Another alms. 'T was given to beauty;
Misery perhaps might have waited longer.
But Charity follows not often duty,
But the heart's impulsions, whereof the stronger
Must still be foremost. And when you know
It was the artist who acted so,
You will not blame him, if 't was not just.
" And now," he said,
As he laid his glov'd hand on the hooded head,
" You will go home, I trust."

" Heaven bless you, sir" — the child begun,
And sobb'd. He turn'd — but not as one

In displeasure I trow. Ah no; for he hears
The sweetest voice ever met his ears,
And he thinks beneath the sun.

He turn'd — and thought of her beauty — thought
It was not right
To leave her expos'd, albeit a child, .
To its risks that night.
Naught in her looks, in her movements naught
Show'd her yet defil'd:
Artless her voice with its silver sound,
And bashful her brow, not as theirs are found
Whom beggary crushes to the ground
In body, soul, and mind.
He turn'd him back, and in manner kind
But firm and grave, thus said,—
While sadly his practis'd eyes explore
Her ingenuous features,—“ Why loiter so?
Is not that enough
To buy you lodging as well as bread ? ”—
“ O sir, much more!
But I don't know where to go.”—
“ Homeless! And on a night so rough
You wander ”—— “ I never was out before.”
And her tears began to flow.

That voice! those tears!
And his heart too yearning! —
At that very moment to his wish he hears

The wheels of a carriage, which empty returning
Draws up for another fare.

The painter nods to the signal made.
“Get in with me.” The child obey’d.
And the door clos’d on the pair.

IV

Three quarters more with their double chime
The clocks have mark’d in the lapse of time —
One-two, one-two, one-two ringing,—
Aye to pensive spirit, bringing
Solemn fancies, sounding sweet
Even in the morning’s prime,
But, in the hours when faintly beat
The pulses of the town, sublime —
Three quarters with their double chime
The clocks have rung out the lapse of time
Further on in the deep of night.
The wind is dead, the rain is o’er.
Hark! ‘tis the rumble of wheels once more;
And in the street,
Near the very spot where they stood before
The man and the child alight.

And well may the well-fee’d coachman stare,
And shake his head as he mounts his seat,
And seem inclin’d to follow the pair,

Watching their lonely forms retreat,
Until they fade in the misty air.

Down a turning, by ways obscure,
Into a street where he felt more sure,
The artist his poor companion led,
And stopt her at a desolate shed ;
From under his arm a bundle he takes,
“ And now, my child, for both our sakes,
Be quick,” he said.
Then slowly, with a measur’d stride,
And anxious brow, and a sense of shame,
Though whatever the smart
Of his suffering pride,
The question’d conscience cannot blame
His rash but generous heart,
Slowly the artist walks apart,
A little way, then stops awhile,
And soon he hears, then feels at his side,
And sees with a smile,
Pressing near him with grateful joy
Yet timidly the while,
And with downcast head a blush to hide,
The girl not now, but a lovely boy.

Rash indeed ! What has he done ?
What will he do, with to-morrow’s sun ?
He has let chance again guide him,
And whatever betide him,

Though a whole city full
Of scoffers next day
Should scoff at him pitiful,
The work thus begun
He will end as he may,
All for the sake of that hapless one.

Now all good angels in Heaven guard them,
From trouble without and within to ward them,
And upright keep and undefil'd
The virtuous man and innocent child,
And with prosperity reward them!
I see the wings celestial hover
Over the earth their souls to cover,
Obedient to the All-ruling Will:
The brows of the angels are dark with care,
Their eyes smile sadly on the pair,
Yet smile they sweetly still.
They have written a leaf in the book of fate.
Full of joy is the present date:
'T is the dawn of the day, serene and sweet.
Brighter and warm the noon appears.
The day sets in clouds, tempestuous, black;
Hope's bow spans awhile the lurid rack,
Now come, now gone, now faint, now bright,
Whose sunshine is but fancy's light,
And rain are tears.

V

In the hall of his lodging the artist knew
Well he should find no lantern burning.
Blessing the thrift which never before
He had found a favor, he open'd the door,
Softly the key in the night-latch turning,
And, the child led in, shut it boldly to.
He lifted his little charge, whose slight
And flexible form, attenuate
By long privation, had come to be,
Alack the day! so slim and light,
It seem'd in that emergency
A scarcely appreciable weight,
He lifted her up, poor thing! and bore
. Her safe in his arms to the second floor.

In the room where we saw him in the armchair
reclining

The fire in his absence replenish'd is shining
Still pleasantly,
With its flames that undulous sink and rise,
Or in jets that noisily spirit and dart
In and out in fantastic wise,
Fitfully lighting the objects of art —
The plaster busts with their empty eyes,
And the wooden figure so strange to see,
Holding its jointed arms apart,

All lighted and shadow'd so daintily !
And lo, on the bars, for the artist's tea,
The copper kettle with blacken'd cheek
From its serpent-mouth puffs a thin gray reek,
Singing merrily !

There, in this room, which though plain it be
Looks an Eden to chill'd and starv'd misery,
The door quickly closing, he sets the child free,
And, with finger on lip and a beating heart,
Turns the key.

What pass'd in the rescued outcast's mind,
While the artist was lighting his study-lamp,
Need not be told.

Think on her blown by the winter wind,
Crouch'd in the damp,
Benumb'd by the cold,
Then look on her there, and you read it all,
As her patron read it without surprise
In the tears which suffusing her violet eyes
Began to fall.

A sense of shame, often felt before
When his lot with that of the poor contrasting,
His food with theirs who went often fasting,
And his goodly clothes with the rags they wore —
A feeling which, passing the maim'd and halt,
Depress'd and humbled him for the time,
As if his own straight limbs were a fault,

And his facile motions a crime —
A feeling, in short, the reverse of theirs
The mass of mankind,
Who rarely find
The burthen too heavy another bears,
And who value blessings not as they bless
In themselves or add to their previous store,
But that by making their own share more
They make another's less —
A sense as of shame for his better state
Smote his generous soul when the artist saw
The poor outcast gaze on the cheerful grate,
The carpeted floor and the paper'd walls,
With wonder in her eyes dilate
And an eager delight restrain'd by awe;
But when down her pallid cheek slow falls
The gather'd tear, he drew near the child,
And whispering said, while he sadly smil'd,
“ Why do you cry ? ”
Then with downcast eyes
The girl replies,
“ I don't know why.”
“ Why, Alice, child — no, *Allen*, my boy —
'T is not with regret those tears should flow.”
“ Oh no ! ”
“ Then you weep with joy.”
“ Yes,” said the artless creature. “ I feel ”——
He look'd around,
At the floor, at the ceiling: “ Lower,” he said,

While he held up a finger, then stoop'd his head
To her mouth, as to catch the sound.

"I feel so happy! — O let me kneel
At your feet, sir, and thank you as I should!"

"No, now let us see to our evening meal;
You must be dying for want of food.
By and by you shall kneel — but 'tis not to me."
Alice look'd in his face inquiringly,
As she wist not what he would!

She look'd in his face, and he gaz'd on hers.
An unconscious instinct within her stirs,
And pleas'd is the innocent girl to behold
In him who protected her,
And whose kindness affected her
Deeply, a man neither ugly nor old.

And he! as his practis'd eyes survey'd
The face for whose beauty he risk'd so much,
He thought he never had yet seen such,
And felt already repaid.

Ay, look at her well!
In all that face there is not one part
Against the canons of strictest art
Will be found to rebel.
The eyes in that light
That look'd black as night
He rightly deem'd were violet-blue:

But 't was not their rare hue,
Nor the lids' soft swell,
Nor the long curv'd lashes which when they fell
Were so sweet to view,
That wrought their spell.

It was their shape, and the glance they threw,
Mournful and timid, yet lingering too,
Of tenderness inexpressible.

The discolor'd orbits and wasted cheek
Expression add

To a look that at once is earnest and meek,
And touchingly sad.

Perfect as aught that sculpture knows
The arch of her forehead between the brows
Where, meeting it with its high base, rose
The faultless nose.

Straight the brows so softly laid,
Low, and lighter in their shade
Than the lashes, but more fair
Still the tresses of her hair.

Tresses! Ah! their ringlets sunny
Once had grac'd that well-turn'd head;
But the crone the child call'd mother —
Hapless child, to know no other!

Happy now, that she is dead!
Shore their golden fleece for money,
Bartering it to buy her bread.
But the mouth! There, painter, gaze!
Never yet in all thy days

Hast thou seen, again wilt see,
Feature form'd so witchingly.
Mark the upper lip's short curves,
And, between, the swelling tip
Fitting to the under lip ;
Mark the teeth which, set compactly,
White and perfect, fit exactly
To the fleshy arch that holds them,
In their unity entrancing
With a watery lustre glancing
When a passing smile unfolds them,
Mark, and tremble for thy nerves !
He has mark'd, and mark'd the whole —
Cheek, and chin, and rounded throat,
And the shoulders' symmetry,
Visible in despite the coat,
Nothing there is lost on him —
Nothing — Fond enthusiast ! See
How his eyes with rapture float
In the tears that make them dim,
Drinking in his poets-soul
All their beauty's witchery !

To count by years
Alice' age might be thirteen,
Yet even less appears.
But cold and dampness and scanty fare
Little promote the growth I ween ;
And so with sorrow and care.

Yet looking on that lovely face,
With its native nobleness of air,
Which sordid habits could not efface
Nor misery impair,
The artist gives it back its gloom,
Bids joy the sunken eye relume,
And the denuded head resume
Its length of ringlets fair.
Lo! on the mental canvas drawn,
What seems the Angel of the dawn!
The fleecy clouds whose vapor glows
With hues they borrow of the sun
Blush in her dimpling cheek, where rose
And lily mix yet are not one,
And the tender beams of golden light
That shoot above, between, beneath,
Sparkle in her tresses bright,
While betwixt her parted teeth
Seems the breath of heaven to flow.
Ah, lovely vision! Sanguine man!
Scarcely can he help revealing
All he feels, and, in the feeling
Of that moment, all his plan —
All his plan of high ambition,
And of good for her condition,
But contents his thought with saying,
On her head his hand soft laying,
Whispering still,
“ It is well that wretch transform'd you:

I could scarce have so deform'd you,
Of my will."

And now the seeming boy is sitting,
On a stool at his master's feet, as fitting,
Beside the grate;
But bashfulness, and her change of state,
Which well to Alice may seem a dream,
Her thirst and hunger abate.
She gazes, poor child, at the fire's gleam,
Her cup unsipp'd, her bread unbroken,
Until the painter has kindly spoken,
And by his kind attitude,
As if on his own light meal intent,
Given her latitude
To follow up her nature's bent.

Well pleas'd is he when the meal is done,
To see the blood no longer lingers
In her chill'd veins, but its currents run
Warmly and brighten the red of her lips,
And glow in her cheeks and the slender tips
And transparent nails of her faultless fingers.

"And now," he said,
"Do you think you could make that sofa your bed,
For a single night?"
Poor little thing! her eyes look bright;
And she tries to tell him he is too good.

"Hush! not a word.
If I let you give way to gratitude,
You will be overheard.
To-morrow you need not silence keep.
To-morrow too you will lodge upstairs.
And now, my child, before you sleep,
Kneel down and say your prayers."

She gaz'd a moment, her cheeks grew red
When she saw his look of grave surprise.
She play'd with her fingers, she cast down her head,
And, when nothing further the artist said,
The tears gush'd from her eyes.

"Know you not what I mean, indeed?
Are you so ignorant? Can it be?
The more, poor child, was then your need
That you this night should meet with me.
But do not cry.
You shall know all about this, by and by.
Now kneel down beside me, and do as I."

The lamp is put out, and by the firelight only
Kneels down the painter, but no more kneels lonely.
As his hands fold together, so Alice beside him
Her little hands clasp'd as, attentive, she ey'd him.
But when the child hears
A Power she knew not
Invok'd to protect her

And bless in her new lot,
The low earnest words that so deeply affect her
Find responses in tears.
Noiselessly wept she, until she was bidden
Say softly Amen.
Then the outcast unhidden
Drew near her protector,
Press'd his arm to her bosom and her lips to his hand.

'T was an act that done in a foreign land,
By a child in her station, had not been surprising;
But at home, and by her!

The artist was rising:

He paus'd on one knee,
Then impulsively
Drew lightly, a moment, the child to his breast.
But a moment, and lightly; but the action express'd,
Not vainly, nor slightly,
A feeling whose tenderness
Left them no longer
As master and servant, if such in its slenderness
Might their union be styl'd,
But bound them together by ties greatly stronger,
In short the relation of father and child.

VI

Hush! tread lightly; breathe not loud;
From the lamplight and firelight shade her eyes:
On the huge old gloomy sofa lies
The outcast sleeping. —
Poor forlorn!
The clothes for whose kind she was not born
Still her limbs enshroud,
And over all but the gentle head
An ample cloak has the artist spread,
The warmth of her body unwasted keeping.
Weary and worn
With her wandering and weeping,
She sleeps as she were dead.

And over her stands,
On his left hip leaning,
With droop'd head aslant and with folded hands,
Her face from the lamplight his figure screening,
The artist, gazing, oh how sadly!
On those faultless features, yet gazing gladly,
Gladly for their rare beauty's sake,
Sadly, seeing that now have vanish'd,
In her sleep,
All the feelings that had banish'd
Sorrow and care from Alice' face,
Back has come their mournful trace—

Mournful, yet it is not deep;
No, for the lines of trouble render
Furrow'd, age, and not the tender.
With *these* all is soften'd, and beauty borrows
Rare fascination from the sorrows
They beweep.
Thus the magic of that dejection,
Thus that loveliness of wo,
Makes solemn the gazer's new affection
Yet gives it a brighter and warmer glow.
See the enthusiast upward throw
His hands, the palms together pressing,
Thanking Heaven for the blessing
Makes his eyes o'erflow !
Blessing? But it needs reflection
How he shall maintain it so.
Stepping softly over the floor,
Putting out the lamp once more,—
Though not light nor noise could waken
Easily that poor forsaken,
Weary-worn and sorrow-shaken,—
By the fire the painter in the armchair sitting,
Folds his arms his breast before,
The night's event in mind goes o'er,
And resolves him what is fitting.

VII

Walter Hervey — the painter, I mean,
Seven and twenty summers had seen ;
Full one quarter of which time,
Since the first day of his manhood's prime,
Had been spent in preparation,
Daily toil and meditation,
In his art sublime.
Sanguine in his hopes of fame
Walter came
With his labors' fruit to town.
But his name was there unknown,
And his manner was his own.
Fashion therefore pass'd him by.
Envy took the critic's eye,
Wonder'd at his crude design,
And, with shrug or solemn frown,
Pointed out a faulty line.
But his coloring divine,
With whose tints they could not vie,
And his touch so strangely fine,
And his magic light and shade,
All of this that is in-born,
Poet-like, nor can be made,
View'd they with affected scorn,
And, secure in past renown,
Put him down.

Hervey, doing as the wise,
Through the envy-brighten'd eyes
Of his foes
Saw where lay his error plainly.
Waiting then, though waiting vainly,
For the sale of his slighted pictures,
Waits he in no weak repose,
But searching nature bids the real
Correct his inexact ideal,
Guided by their captious strictures.

Eight moons — ah welaway, how weary !
Eight weary moons in the mighty city,
All alone,
Walter had liv'd, when, that night so dreary,
He found the child moaning, and rais'd her in pity
And took her away from the wet door-stone.

At the time,
To lodge and to clothe her was all his thought
And to keep her from want and crime.
But, on their way to the shops he sought,
He question'd her of herself and ties;
And the child, by her replies,
In her artless tone,
With that winning sweetness all her own,
Such a sorrowful tale of wrongs revealing,
Woke within him a deeper feeling,
And a change of purpose wrought.

Naught upon earth could be more lone,
Naught so helpless as was she,
Naught less worthy to be thrown
On a world so cruel-cold,
Where innocence is hourly sold
And justice rarely free.
And Walter shudder'd, as he thought
Of the ruin to which Alice might be brought,
If lodg'd as wretches be.
Yet where to place her? It were not well
Even if he knew
To trust the driver, who might not be true,
And for himself, he could not tell
No more than she —
Than she — poor wretch! who that morn from the floor
Where her mother died the day before
Had been driven, her all the scant clothes she wore,
And wist not where to flee.
'T was then that the thought occurs
Of her disguisement.
Impulsive and ardent, his fancy excited
He waits not advisement,
But that project to aught prefers
Which her safety for naught defers
And whose perils, for such as he,
Had a wildness and mystery,
A romance, that invited.

It were not easy I ween to say,

How much the magic of Alice' voice,
And her beauty,
Had to do with her patron's choice,
Giving bias to his duty:
But this is sure;
When to his words, "There is but one way
To lodge you safely: will you be my boy?"
The girl, whose soul was simple as pure,
Said simply, "Yes," 't was an unmix'd joy,
Unmix'd with doubt of his perilous part,
Or with even a thought of its annoy,
Quicken'd the pulse of the painter's heart.

That part is commenc'd. We have seen how well.
There sleeps the child on the sofa beside him.
And now, no longer under the spell
Of her witching ways, he ponders as fitting,
In the firelight sitting,
For her and himself the course that should guide him.
And midnight finds him still seated there,
With folded arms, in the old armchair,
As if he were a sick-watch keeping
Over the child so stilly sleeping,
Turning ever and anon his head,
Yet softly, as afraid to stir,
Lest his change of posture should waken her
Who sleeps as she were dead!

VIII

Four happy months on rapid wing
Have flit away.
'T is a sweet sweet day
In the middle of the second month of Spring.
All living things in the sun look gay:
No sooty vapors the town enshroud;
And not a feather of a cloud
Obstructs his ray.
See! on the white stone window-sill
The sparrows whose hunger,
Albeit no longer
Lonely, the painter answereth still —
Though only to Alice they are not shy,
Leaping up when she is by
And pecking the glass with their short black bill —
See! no longer aheap with cold,
Their bodies look more spare and hard,
Smooth lie the feathers of their dusky coat,
And, in the joy of their spirits bold,
They spar, with uplifted wings, or in play
Twitter and chatter with tuneless throat.
Over the way,
In the baron's yard,
The crows are cawing on the top of the oak,
Whose gnarled trunk, all black with smoke,
Seems spangled o'er

With the short young leaves that plume each spray
Of the trees before.

'Tis the season of that solemn day,
When the Incarnate Word divine,
That for me and mine
Vouchsaf'd to die,
Shook off the cerements of the tomb
And rose on high;
And the streets are resonant with the joy
Of the passers-by.
All without has an air of gladness.
And within, in the painter Walter's room,
The shadow you see comes not of gloom,
Albeit it is a shadow of sadness.
Before his easel the painter stands,
Palette and pencil in his hands,
A sable pencil so very fine
You may put the point through a needle's eye.
Yet he uses it not for surface or line:
And this is why.
His great design,
The beautiful Angel of the Dawn,
Which is to win for the painter fame,
For the model fortune, is already drawn,
And painted, and set in its gilded frame,
And, the living model seated nigh,
Parallel with the canvas' face,
Equidistant from both he takes his place,

Scanning his handiwork curiously,
To see what divergences he may trace,
Or if ever so small
A point where at all
A touch may make it more closely vie
With nature's colors and symmetry.

Futile task! What paint may render
Flesh so ivory-like yet tender?
What the lustre of that eye?
Enough to have caught the angelic smile,
Winning-sweet, yet sad the while,
Makes the winged child of the sky
Seem to pity the toil and sorrow
On the earth, for man, each morrow,
Dawning with the light on high.

Dainty Alice! Shelter'd now,
Warmly clad and duly fed,
Seem'd she by the hour to grow,
And so beautiful,— though her head
Was not suffer'd the locks to wear,
The undulous locks of sunny hair,
The painter out of his brain has depicted,—
Ofttimes trembles he with dread
Lest, by the eyes that saw her there,
His dangerous secret should be detected—
Forgetting that theirs were not artists' eyes,
And that Alice' beauty would not seem rare

To such as knew not how to prize
Her features' shape and air.

Lovely Alice! her patron's care
Has hourly been to store her mind.
It has not vex'd him not to find
High talent; he had read its want in the hue
Of her large long eyes of purplish blue,
So rare in kind.

Yet docile, and diligent to please,
She learn'd what he taught, and learn'd it well,
If not with ease.—

But in what words, what rythm tell,
How at once and not by degrees,
As the dew of his influence on it fell,
Her fertile heart, where Heaven had sown
The seeds of all things good and sweet,
Put forth its virtues fully blown

And grace complete?

To the lone tree clinging,

That lonely vine,

Its soft tendrils flinging

Higher and wider day by day,

Daily seem'd more closely to twine

Around his firm branches, with their leaves so mingling

Her own green foliage, you might not say,

Except by one from the other singling,

Which is either, on stem or spray.

Alike in the shine

Of the pleasant sun, in frosty weather
They droop together;
The same wind alike their branches stirs:
But this seems graver and that more gay;
The strength is his, the grace all hers.

And these new feelings that stir her heart,
Which dormant till then no touch had awaken,
To her eyes, her voice, her manner impart
A tenderness not to be mistaken.
It is feminine all; and if to see
Well and clearly there needed but eyes,
If suspicion could search without a clew,
Walter Hervey soon might rue
The romance, the more than charity,
That had prompted her disguise.

Charming Alice! the soul that beams
From the deep-blue heaven of her eye,
As sits she patient the easel by,
To the enraptur'd artist seems
Such as must all art defy.
Yet while he wonders to behold
How nearly those painted lids unfold
On the canvas' magic mirror
The orbs' true splendor, he fain would try
If perchance some unseen error
In the image thus reflected,
By close scrutiny detected,

May not bring the effect corrected
To the model soul more nigh.

The day is closing.
The shadow upon the baron's wall
Has pass'd the coping and climbs the trees;
The mists that the sun had dispell'd when high
Begin to fall;
And now upon the verge of the sky
The gazer sees
A dusky smoke-like haze reposing:
And lo, where awakens the evening breeze!
The noisy crows from their half-built nest
Have fled away;
The busy sparrows appear to tire,
And clustering rest
On bough and spray;
And flashing back the red sun's ray
The distant windows across the way
Seem all on fire.

O hour of hours! dear to the bard,
More dear to the painter, who in its light
Finds temper'd what had glow'd too bright
And mellow'd what was hard.
The rosy eve, subdu'd yet warm,
Spreads o'er the color'd sheet the charm
Of harmony and perfect tone;
Like the Greek's atrament unknown,

The dusky crystal of its glaze
Veils-o'er the beauties it arrays
In splendor not their own.

Before his easel still Walter stands,
Pencil and palette in his hands.
Stepping back, he suddenly throws
Them both aside,
And, while his cheek with transport glows
And lawful pride,
“Behold!” he cries, “’T is done!
Look, Alice, look! my darling child!
To you, to you, I owe it all!
No more shall Walter Hervey fall.
And when the prize
For which so many years I’ve toil’d
At last is won,
Mine be the glory, yours the gold:
The Angel of the Morning sold
Shall place his lovely model where
She may live properly, nor wear
The slough of this disguise.
'T is all of you! Behold! behold!”
His palms on Alice’ fingers fold.
But when, to set her in the light
In which to see his picture right,
He lifts the hands that on hers lay,
The child, as if to shun the sight,
Turn’d round and walk’d away!

A moment, Walter felt surprise.
But knowing her gentle, never bold,
Not petulant, but patient still,
Submissive ever to his will,
He follow'd her and softly said,
“ Alice! I hope you do not regret
Your part in this ? ” Her hands have met
Before her face when thus he speaks:
He lifts them tenderly, and seeks
To turn the averted head.
Large tears were trickling down her cheeks.
And his own were not unwet.

CHANT THE SECOND

CHANT THE SECOND

I

The blackbird's song is sweetest now.
His whistle is so loud and clear,
The little redbreast on the bough
Can scarcely catch the listening ear.
And yet the bright-ey'd warbler sings,
With his whole heart, his softest lay,
Perch'd upon the nearest spray —
So near, unlike the blackbird shy,
You mark the glitter of his eye,
And plain as in a print describ
His russet throat and olive wings.
The woods have now a deeper green,
Though still the leaves are sparse and small:
The horsechestnut's limbs, that graceful fall,
All white with clustering flowers are seen,
Whose tufted cones the form assume
Of feathers in a marshal's plume.
The swan, with lifted wings that floats,
Moves still sedate and graceful-slow,
Yet in her eye,

And self-complacent air elate,
You may read more than vanity
And pleasure in her pride of state:
While from their inharmonious throats
The meaner fowl, that quicker row
Their plumy barge,
Loud sounds of exultation throw,
Rejoicing on the sunny pool
To skim at large,
Or frequent dive as if to cool
Their breasts below.

All nature speaks a warmer sun
And longer day.
It is indeed in the month of May;
And this the scene,
Where in gravel'd walk, or alley green,
Behold those happy children run,
All redd'n'd with the toil of play,
In the Queen's groves at Kensington !

In town the scene is yet more gay,
If not so soft a one.
Lo, in the square of haughty name,
Where stands the hero on his pile,
And stands forlorn,
A stain on art that, but for shame,
Would make us smile,
And wakes the jealous Frenchman's scorn — !

Lo, toward the shrine of graphic art
(Shrine not too fair)
The well-dress'd idle throng repair,
The noble and the city dame,
Grave lords and foplings smart!

Alas for Walter! and for hope
Alas, were 't not of Heaven's will!
His rare design is in its scope
Too high for the unthinking crowd, and still
The Morning Angel's sad sweet smile
Wins not even those it draws the while.
And yet if mankind in that year
Were the same as in other years they have been,
There wanted but one voice I ween,
One leading voice, one guiding eye,
To make the crowd therein desery
More even than Walter's self had seen.

II

Anxious, and most for Alice' sake,
Behold him mingle with the crowd!
To catch their looks, to hear them make
Their comments rash but rarely loud.
Sadly he sees them turn away
To gaudier hues and gayer themes.
But can it be? or what he deems

So real is it fancy's play ?
A stately man and lady fair
Rapt in amaze are standing there,
And lo, the lovely lady seems
His spirit of the morning air,
Made flesh, and wondering to behold
Those fleecy matin clouds unfold
Her image and her radiant smile —
Radiant sweet yet sad the while —
Gleaming from that paint and gold.

As turn to each other in their amaze
The startled pair, the painter's gaze
Meets the lovely lady's view ;
So eager, and so wondering too,
That instantly down her veil she drew
Gravely over her face, though still
Without disdain, for as in a book
She read his thought in the painter's look ;
So full it was of a sweet regard,
Sweet yet sad, that despite her will
The lady, who tenderly lov'd her lord
And was constant in thought as in act and word,
Felt her heart thrill.

And now must the artist, pain'd to view
Her trouble, gravely yet slightly bowing,
Thus plead, his impulse strange avowing,
“ Pardon me ; when that head I drew ” —

Eagerly broke the lady's lord
In upon the artist's word:
"Are you the painter then? I meant—
But let us from this room withdraw."
There was in his manner, with courtesy blent,
A certain careless haste that spoke
One us'd to live with those who took
His word for law.

This Walter felt, but reck'd it not:
Sweet Alice' fortune lies at stake;
Self-love has little time to wake,
And pride is all forgot.
But, following the gentle pair,
He marks a movement in the throng,
And, turning, sees the many there
As by one impulse borne along
To view the Angel of the Air,
To gaze, and with admiring eyes,
Upon the very piece, before
They seemed to have no fancy for,
And almost to despise!

III

Down to the room
Where the busts and figures of plaster and stone
Look so silent and awful and cold

Their very light seems a kind of gloom
After the colors manifold
Of the walls above and the eyes that shone,
Looking out upon your own,
Looking out from the frames of gold—
Down to the Sculpture Room the pair,
Follow'd by Walter, took their way.
“Mr. Walter Hervey, I think?” when there
Said the stately man with a courteous air,
As he look'd on the book in his hand that lay.
The painter bow'd. “Mr. Hervey, I meant
To seek you. And therefore I need not say
I am well pleas'd to meet with you now.”
And Walter replies with a slighter bow.
“If that noble picture of yours be still
Unsold, it is mine, at what price you will.”
He proffer'd his card as this he said;
And Walter read,
With a joy that made his heart to fill,
The title, *Earl of Duttonville.*

“My lord,” said Walter, after a pause,
Which his throbbing pulses made him need,
“I have no price: and if none I name,
It is because—
’Tis presumption perhaps—but—I look to fame
For my only meed.”
The Earl smil'd not, to his great relief,
Who thus pursu'd: “There is one indeed

For whom however I well may claim
All that your bounty can give. The chief,
Sole source she is of whatever is fine,
If such there be, in that piece of mine." —

"The model you mean. 'T is a child — a girl,"
Said, with something of effort, the Earl.

"It is," said Hervey, and look'd around.

"Yes," said the Earl to the painter's surprise,
While the little arm in his own that lies
Weighs heavily, and his earnest eyes
Glow more intensely, "Yes, speak lower." —

"If this object be found
All that I think her, all that I know her,
So good, and so pure,
You will not, you will not, my lord, I am sure,
Refuse your aid,
To find for her youth, so immature,
That honest shelter I feel that I owe her,
But cannot extend to the hapless maid.
Give me to feel but unafraid,
To see her future once made secure,
My lord, I am more than paid."

Through her veil the lovely Countess a minute
Gaz'd in the painter's eloquent face
Admiringly.

'T was a look of respect, and one might trace
A warmth of congenial feeling in it
Most fair to see.

The next, her brows gather'd, and anxiously
She turn'd to her lord,
Who in soften'd tone
Thus took up the word :
“ Where met you this child, who is so alone ? ” —
“ Tis a long tale,” said Walter; “ nor can this be
Fit place to tell it in. Yet may I say,
From her innocent story of wrong and wo
She must have been born for a better day :
But, stolen or lost ” — “ How long ago ?
I mean ” —
(The Earl's breath came with a sort of gasp)
“ How old is she now ? ” — “ About thirteen.”
The Earl's face was seen
To take the hue of the marble around,
While the lady, quite unable to stand,
Grasp'd his arm with a nervous grasp,
As if ready to sink to the ground.

Walter brought a chair, the Earl press'd her hand,
And, seating her, whisper'd, “ More self-command,”
Then, suddenly turning to Walter, said,
In the same low voice, but with alter'd tone,
While his hand on the painter's arm is laid,
Whose eyes look into his own,
“ Mr. Hervey — have you never heard
Of the loss that befel me some years ago ? ”
Whereto Walter answers simply, “ No,”

And look'd what he averr'd.

" And yet," quoth the Earl, " it was widely known."

A light o'er the artist's visage shone,
A sudden flash from the spirit within.
He look'd at the Countess, and would have spoke ;
But eagerly, ere he could begin,
The Earl again the brief silence broke.

" I read your thoughts, your hopes," said he.

" Judge then of those that wake in me.

Be but those hopes" — He sudden stopp'd,
And set his teeth as if in pain.

The hand that has for a moment dropp'd
Is laid on Hervey's arm again.

" Where is she lodg'd ? And can we see
This child — and now ? without delay ? "

And Walter answers, " Instantly."

" It is my wish. Come then," said the Earl.
" You will tell us all, upon the way,
We long to ask of this—wondrous girl,
And will hear what we too have to say."

If Walter at a later day,
Nay that very night, pondering what had pass'd,
Blush'd to read in the noble's haste
A wish to take unawares his ward,
Who, by him prepar'd,
Might impose on the former a spurious claim,
If this thought awoke both anger and shame,

In his reason he could not condemn the Earl,
Whose caution was not to blame.

IV

Alice — Sweet Alice! who looks on thee
Forgets the Morning Angel quite!
What though thy hair floats no more free
In long loose ringlets soft and bright,
Yet in thy cheeks of living bloom,
Thine eyes that beam with changeful light,
I see what baffles all the might
Of art to picture, and the sight
Thy freshness gladdens finds but gloom
The splendor of that mimic ray
Which gilds thy counterfeit, whose day
Compar'd with thine is as the night!—
Alice is in the painter's room —
Happiest there!
On a cushion'd stool low sitting,
Her left arm leaning on a chair.
The clothes she is oblig'd to wear,
Though fashion'd ill and loosely fitting,
Hide not a form which, immature,
Not rounded yet to all its grace,
Is of an order classic-pure,
In keeping with her classic face.

The slender waist, the line that waves
Where rise and fall the hip and thigh,
Will one day match the marble Slave's,
And might have made Canova sigh.
Her leaning posture marks this well,
The incurvate loin, the hip's soft swell.
The curtain'd windows' shadows fall
Over this part, the light descending
From the top opening high and small
Floods all the rest. Her head is bending
On her left hand, while its fellow
In her lap a book is holding,
Clos'd and over her fingers folding.
'T is a light that is not mellow,
'T is a light that is not free,
This, which, falling slantingly,
Touches with a gold-like yellow,
Here and there,
The looser ringlets of her hair —
Those single threads that dazzlingly
Float apart and melt in air —
Marvelously fine to see, —
'T is not fit for youth this light,
'T is not fit for aught so fair,
Yet it sets before the sight;
Clear in their perfection rare,
Features — But they all are painted.
Would it were to do once more!
'T is so pleasant to go o'er

Memories our souls have sainted,
Scenes that better days restore !

What does Alice ? What thinks she ?
On the cushion'd stool low sitting,
Gazing so abstractedly
On the tiny motes slow flitting
In the slanting beams that fall
From the toplight high and small ?
Does she meditate her task,
With the folded book before her ?
Thinks she of what may come o'er her ?
Ponders she the dreary past ?
Is she sitting on the stone
In the rain,
Houseless, hungry, all alone
In a world where she has known
Nothing else but pain ?
Darker falls the night around her,
Through her thin clothes soaks the shower,
Rare the passers at that hour,
And her pale lips plead in vain.
But a kindly hand has found her ;
Light and warmth and love surround her :
Will those gifts remain ?
If her fancy shape not those
Which she deems
Coming years may haply send her,
Not unpleasant are her dreams ;

For those eyes so mystic-tender,
Thoughtful-sad and earnest-meek,
Have a light that almost glows,
And the faint hues of her cheek
Deepen to a redder rose.

“

The rumbling of a stately coach
Driven to the house awakes her not :
The knocker thunders its approach ;
Her eyes regard the selfsame spot :
Footsteps are heard upon the stair ;
She starts ; she throws upon the chair
The unstudied book ; her eyes' soft light
Grows brighter, while her cheeks, her air,
Her very motion, beam delight.
She springs, she opes the narrow door,
Darts to the landingplace, but there
Stands still.
In the joy with which her young heart beats,
She has heard but one man's step, no more.
Now check'd, as if her joy were sin,
Confus'd she timidly retreats
With backward step, and sees come in,
The while her guardian steps before
And bowing pauses at the sill,
The Lord and Lady Duttonville.

V

Who may detail what felt the pair ?
Who may depict even their amaze ?
Even timid Alice needs must gaze
Upon her breathing likeness there.
Despite her dress, her shorten'd hair,
The deeper color of her eyes,
The living model nearer came
To what was loveliest in the dame,
Than painted in an angel's guise.

Giddy with what she saw, had heard
That blessed day
Told by the painter to her lord
While on their way,
The lady lost all self-command,
Her arms thrown out, with accent wild
Yet full of tenderness, she cry'd,
'T was but one word,
“ My child ! ”
Upon those longing arms the Earl,
Close at her side,
Laid rapidly as thought his hand,
And with whisper'd word and anxious frown
Making the trembling dame sit down,
Turn'd and said to the astonish'd girl,

Addressing her with the selfsame term,
As if he only took up the thread
Of what his lady should have said —
But his voice was far from firm —
“ My child, your ” — The word that should succeed,
Master, stuck in the speaker’s throat,
Who, pausing briefly, subjoin’d instead,
“ Mr. Hervey, I mean — has kindly agreed
To have you sit for a simple head.
‘T is as a girl. But you will not need ” —
(Thrilling, he paus’d again to note
How Alice by turns grew pale and red —)
“ To change your dress. You are well as you are.
Place yourself in the chair,
And turn down the collar of your coat.”

Alice look’d to her patron, and reading there,
In his pale face, approval, mutely comply’d.
The easel is plac’d, the canvas ready,
The artist, with a hand unsteady,
Makes sharp his chalk.
Behind, at the model’s nearer side,
His feet on the two steps of the throne,
The Earl, who alone
Has power to talk,
His right hand extending
To Alice’ right shoulder,
While the other turn’d inward, the forefinger bending
On his close-shut lips, made he

A sign to his lady,
A sign that controll'd her,
Where standing below him, her hands nervously clasping,
She watch'd his proceeding,
With eyes that seem'd bleeding
And breath that came gasping —
The Earl directs Alice, who fill'd with surprise,
With confusion, with shame, watches Hervey's sad eyes,
That tearful implore her
Have patience. Before her
She holds to her breast
The folds of her vest;
While the Earl, ill at ease,
With a tremulous care,
As if he would spare her
The confusion he sees,
Or as in dread to reveal
What the dress might conceal,
The right shoulder now bare
Proceeds to make barer.

On a sudden, his face grows pale as death,
He grasps the Countess by both her wrists,
He speaks not — for words he has no breath,
But points to a spot where his finger rests,
A small round spot, in size and in hue
Like the fruit of the holly. At once, at the view
Of the mark which none so well could know,
The lady cried, with a thrilling cry,

"Alice!" What made the child reply,
Turning round quickly as if she knew—
In the selfsame tone, in the same voice too!
'T was wonderful that it should be so!
Turning round quickly, as if she knew
Who call'd—"Mamma!"? It was not I trow,
It could not be,
The memory of her infancy
When of years she had as yet but two.
Was it then the sympathy
Of her tender nature, already stirr'd
By what she had seen, by what she had heard,
That made her, as if intuitively,
Comprehend at once what the voice express'd
And feel whose that voice must be?
Whatever the cause, the word is said
That makes the mother supremely blest,
And thrills the rest.
She spreads her arms, the angelic head
Is buried in the Countess' breast.

VI

In the dim-lit study's hush profound
The soft low sobbing of child and mother
Rises with a lessening sound.
Over the pair as they clasp each other,
The Earl, with feelings too strong to smother,

Stooping lowly,
Gently rests a hand on each.
Scalding tears, all large and single,
Trickling slowly
Down his mans-cheeks, haply mingle,
With their freer, painless shower,
Answering it, and with like power
Of a tongueless speech.

It was a scene for a painter to see.
Yet when Alice, now set free,
Look'd around,
He she sought for was not found ;
They were there but three.

“ And have you no embrace for me ?
Alice, none ?
O my child ! ”
Sorrowfully spoke the Earl ;
For he saw the artless girl,
Now the feeling was departed
That had taken her by surprise,
Disconcerted and faint-hearted
Thus with strangers left alone,
Strangers that were parents styl'd
Yet were all unknown,
Timid and uncertain stand,
Pale with downcast eyes.
So he took in his her hand,

Pleas'd to mark its perfect fingers,
And, as Alice aw'd still lingers,
Laid his right hand on her shoulder ;
But her mien was cold and shy.
Kissing then her passive brow,
Quoth the father with a sigh,
“ ‘T is too much to look for now ;
You will love me by and by.
Yet, my child, ‘t is somewhat hard
From your breast to be debarr’d
Even by one who has been more nigh,”
(Well he marks the wandering eye
Anxious look for Walter,) — “ though
‘T is but natural I avow,
Your regard ;
And, I know,
Much indeed to him you owe.
That I feel it time will show.—
But where is he ? ” He call’d, and came
Hervey, answering to his name,
Came with eyes all red with weeping,
Yet where present joy was seen,
Showing thoughts that were in keeping
With that grave yet happy scene.

Advancing with eagerness,
Taking both hands in his,
The Earl makes endeavor
The depth of his gratitude

Faintly to show:
“ What shall we do ?
What can we ever ?
Dear Mr. Hervey, to render to you
The half that we owe ? ”

Then the artist smiles sadly,
And looking on Alice, who listens, so gladly,
In a sweet attitude,
Her hand in her mother’s, whose left arm is round her,
Says, “ My lord ” — (As he speaks,
The blood leaves her cheeks ;
Far from delighted,
The girl seems affrighted,
And the title to wound her) —
“ You have not forgotten what so lately was said.
I ask’d for an innocent, homeless maid,
A virtuous shelter and honest bread.
She has more. *I am more than paid.* ”

The blood comes back with delight,
And those eyes
Of singular beauty grow strangely bright,
While the Earl at once replies :
“ You spoke of the picture, and that alone :
But what I meant
Was a debt that gold can never pay,
Yet a debt ’tis my joy to own.
For that breathing paint which you well have styl’d

An Angel, but which is yet my child,
We will speak of it another day,
For unchang'd is my intent."

" Yet for that piece this must I say —
And better now than a later minute :
The object for which, though not without pain,
It should be sold,
Is happily now render'd vain,
And our treaty at end ere we could begin it.
With that single piece I cannot part ;
'T were to wring my heart,
Though you weigh'd it, in its frame, with gold.
My lord, you will not think me rude " —
(The Earl look'd puzzled, troubled, sad ;
But Alice, strange to say ! seem'd glad ;
And the painter thus pursu'd :) —
" The honor you have this day done me,
The sole regard that has shone upon me
Since I began
To tread that path whose toil has taught me,
Whatever in rapt hours I thought me,
I am but man,
For this I am grateful, and would fain
My words make true.
When — Lady Alice — Let me be
The first by that title to address her " —
(What makes her color once more flee ?
What in his courtesy should distress her ?)

"When Lady Alice' hair is grown,
If it please your lordship, I will take
Her portrait, for her father's sake,
And for her own.

The Morning Angel shall not rise
More lovely in her rosy skies,
Than in this newer piecee of mine,
Where truth shall make the form divine
And truth alone.

And further, would it please you own
A copy of the first design,
Command, my lord, my willing art;
It shall not vary, tint nor line;
But bid me not, I pray, resign
What lies so near my heart!"

Looking awhile in the artist's eyes,
Awhile stood still
The noble Earl of Duttonville.
Noble he was, in more than name;
And well his virtue knew to prize
In other hearts the same.

"Be it so then!" at length he said,
Pressing warmly the artist's hand:
"Such self-denial is so rarely display'd,
It is hard perhaps to understand :
Yet I read you well. Be it as you will:
The loftier is your flight to fame.
But be it mine,

Not to make your merits shine —
Their lustre is their own —
But to set them where the public eye
Shall not in ignorance pass them by
For paler lights more known.

That honor won,
Wealth blossoms underneath its sun ;
And soon my daughter's heart shall thrill
To see her benefactor fill
In fortune and in fame the place
Which nature destin'd him to grace."

This said, he mark'd in Alice' face
What made him add more warmly still :
" But for that debt whereof I spoke,
Which neither she nor I can pay,
And which I read, in her innocent look,
Was not contracted first this day,
But counts from all that you have done
Since the dismal night you ventur'd on
That brave good part,
When houseless, hungry, cold, and lone,
You lifted her up from the wet door-stone
To fit her for her mother's heart.

When, looking back into the past,
She and ourselves shall trembling see
What, but for all from first to last
You have done for her, she now might be —
O Mr. Hervey ! what to say ?
Our lives alone will henceforth show

If we are anxious to repay
A part of what we owe."

The Earl believ'd himself sincere ;
His cheek was flush'd, the starting tear
Stood in his fine blue eye.
He turn'd to Alice. With thrilling joy
He sees his child's eyes fix on his,
Those eyes of matchless tenderness,
With a look so admiring, fond the while,
The father, with a happy smile
And quicken'd pulse, his arms outspread.
Then Alice had no longer dread :
No longer timid, cold and shy,
She sprung at once to his embrace ;
"My father!" It was all she said,
And in his breast conceal'd her face.

Walter Hervey turn'd aside.
If the Countess saw not what in his pride
The man would hide,
'Twas that she had enough to do
To stay her own eyes' overflow.

VII

"My child"—said the Earl— They are seated now,
Alice between her mother and sire,

Who hold each a hand, while around her their arms
Are thrown, and they gaze on her marvelous charms
As if they could never tire.

They are seated now.

The painter stands,
On the easel leaning with folded hands,
While his pensive brow,
Flushing and growing pale by turns,
Hints a thought that inward burns
With a smouldering fire.

“My child, your story has all been told,
All your preserver knew to tell.
The same your own lips shall unfold.
But first, hear how the chance befel
That put you in that wretch’s hold.

“I well remember — Ah, how well!
I see you now: you come before
These eyes a child but little more
Than two years old.
I see you tottering strive to walk,
And walking fall.
I hear those sweet lips’ broken talk.
Ah yes, I hear and see it all!
Yes, Alice, well do I remember:
‘T was a sunny day of bleak December.
Your nurse had taken you for the air
In a wicker car
Drawn by two swans well-train’d to bear

Their tiny harness, while, beside,
Another maiden, younger far,
Walk'd constantly, their course to guide.
When stopping at the low-barr'd fence
That parts the castle park in two,
The nurse, it seems, found some pretence
To send the girl back, who, return'd,
Found the frail wagon overturn'd
Even where 't had stood,
But you,
Your nurse, the swans, were gone;
The traces cut lay on a stone
Besmear'd with blood.
Some feathers show'd
Whence this had flow'd.
Drops too were found in the neighboring wood,
And track'd a path to the open road.

“ The nurse had oftentimes been chidden
For being with certain gypsies found
Whose entrance on the castle ground
Had been forbidden.
With one of these, a man confess'd
The very worst of the whole bad nest,
And whom, oft forgiven,
By his many acts of bold larceny
I at last was driven
To punish, though still with leniency,
The selfwill'd girl was seen to be

Habitually.

After the time of the fellow's arrest,
Up to the day they set him free,
Her mien was sullen, to that degree,
That for this, if not for her obduracy,
She would have been at once dismiss'd
But for the love you seem'd to bear her,
Which made your mother and myself agree
For your sake, and for hers, to spare her.

"The encampment was search'd. In a secret place,
Under some straw,
There purposely tost,
The dead birds we saw ;
But we found no trace
Of the living lost.
Neither menace nor bribe
Avail'd with the tribe ;
They were promis'd impunity from the law ;
But persisted still in one simple tale :
They had seen the pair,
And bought the swans, but after the sale
The couple departed they knew not where.
Watches were set, scouts were sent,
But nowhere around,
Nor in any tent,
Was the least sign of their lurking found,
Nor a trace of whither they went.
Rewards were posted in every town,

The shrewdest agents the courts could supply
Employ'd; but our hopes only one day rose high,
The next to sink lower down.
Tell me, my child, was the hag — I mean
Her you call'd 'Mother' — tall and lean?"—
 "No, my lord, short and thick-set — and old."—
 "I see it now! My child was sold
From the very first —
Our beautiful babe, so softly nurs'd!
To assist some beggar in her trade,
While those fiends accrues'd,
Unencumber'd, an easy escape have made
In some smuggler's craft. Plot too well laid!
Doubtless early design'd and maturely weigh'd.
But tell me, Alice — But do not use
Again that formal term, *my lord*;
If your lips refuse
As yet to shape a softer word,
Wait awhile; the truer your heart —
And I love you more for this honest part;
But leave to riper years than thine,
And happier fates, and hearts less fine,
Such terms of distance to apply
To parents more reserv'd than I."—

Alice' soft eyes look'd up and read,
Over the Earl's whole visage spread,
The joy, the love that grew apace —
A love her mother's love exceeding,

As if his very soul were feeding
On her sweet face.
She rais'd his hand that held her own
To her lips, as with Hervey's she had done,
Under like impulse, with like effect.
Touch'd by this unexpected part,
The Earl drew the beautiful girl to his breast,
His lips to her forehead and eyelids press'd,
And smoothing down her delicate hair
With a happy sigh,
Which found an echo in Walter's heart,
Resum'd : " Did the woman seem ever aware
Of your real birth, or in aught betray
What led you to doubt her lawful claim
To be call'd, O my God ! by a mother's name ? "

" More than once. When I came not home
With money sufficient to buy her rum,
She would angrily say,
While she beat me hard as long as she could,
' You little wretch ! 't is your mis-proud blood
That has always stood,
And will, in luck's way.
Humble yourself, or I'll let it out,
I will ! ”

With a thrill
Both the parents heard. Then the sire in a tone
Of wonder and joy cry'd, " Your voice alone

Almost puts your birth beyond a doubt !
'T is your mother's own !
As hers must have been at your tender age.—
Proceed, my love." — "On a certain day,
Excited by drink and blind with rage,
She seiz'd me by my new-grown hair ;
' You spiritless brat ! ' she cried, ' Look there !
Is n't that a rag for a beggar to wear ? '
Taking out from a hole in the wall — a place
Where she hid such things as she had to spare —
The sleeve of a child's dress, trimm'd with lace.
I wanted to touch it, or see it more near,
And ask'd whence it came. But she cry'd, with a sneer,
' Tell *you*, and be transported ! Not I ! —
And, hark you ! if ever I learn that you say
A word of what you have seen, or try
To get hold of that rag until I be dead,
I'll pull, one by one, every tooth in your head,
And will so scar your cheeks you never again
Will have cause to be vain !
And yet,' — she added, with a frightful grin
That made me tremble, — ' to make you plain
Would spoil my fortune as well as yours ;
And they are both to win :
But I'll give you such marks as time easily cures,
With a little wholesome pain ! '
She laid me then" — Cries the sire, " No more !
Come, Alice ; we will at once explore
This devil's den.

That you are our long-lost child is plain,
Plain to your mother's as to my mind ;
But let us find
The remnant of the robe you wore
That fatal day ;
This, with the tokens known before,
Gives evidence before all men
Which nothing can gainsay.—
Mr. Hervey, I leave my dame with you ;
Alice and I must go alone.
He who so true
A protector is known
Of the child," adds the gladden'd sire with a smile,
" May be trusted, I think, with the mother awhile,
So awhile adieu ! "

VIII

If a spirit were given to a hackney-coach,
And speech to reveal
With joy, with sorrow, with self-reproach,
With pride, all the good it had help'd to promote
And the ill it had aided to conceal,
How many things well worthy note,
How much from which we would gladly steal
In disgust away,
Would it bring to the light of impartial day !

Rarely such spirit would have to tell,
Rarely to tell with so much pride,
Of purer hopes, of truer joy
Chasten'd by sorrows long borne and well,
And, on one side,
Of tenderer love, than it now might see
In the kindred hearts of the kindred pair
Who, side by side
On its dirty cushions, in that musty air,
Are happier there,
And more elate,
Than ever again that seeming boy
Perhaps shall be,
Than ever has been in his coach of state
The noble sire, who his child's hand holding,
And her form enfolding
In a strict embrace,
As if he fear'd even in that place
To have her lost to him once more,
Makes her tell her story o'er,
All that he has heard before,
All that Hervey, passing over
As self-praise,
Modestly would not discover
Of her recent days.
This, not lightly it passing by,
Doth grateful Alice to her father
Innocently magnify :
With what pleasure, you may gather

From her cheek and from her eye.
And the Earl,
As each reply,
Which his artful questions drew
From the artless girl,
Brings out to his delighted view,
In the moral of his daughter,
Much of the good the artist has taught her,
And some of the knowledge too,
Vows—ah yes, he vows anew,
To Walter in his inmost heart,
The debt he owes for “that brave good part.”
May he pay it when 't is due!

Well for thee, Alice! well for thee
Thy nature is not light and vain!
Thy sire's delight is all too plain
As he gazes lovelingly
On thy beauty, as he hears
With enrapt yet wondering ears
In thy accents' melody
Thy mother's voice again.
But as thy long humiliation,
Eleven years' sorrowing and privation,
To thy deep-blue eyes have given
That sweet look of resignation,
Wishful, meek, and full of sadness,
Yet so tender, makes thee seem
Some descended child of Heaven

Mourning over human badness,
And no coming years of gladness,
Nor yet length of years I deem,
Shall efface
This thy earlier habits' trace,
So thy spirit shall retain
Evermore
All those traces of its pain —
Of the pain so long it bore,
Bore so long and bore so well,
And no change of good or ill
That the future has in store
Shall one drop of pride instil
In thy heart or make thee vain.

The dwelling is found, the dwelling they sought.
How much worse than the Earl had thought!
In a filthy and overpeopled lane,
Narrow and dark, and mouldy-smelling,
Stood the o'erpeopled and filthy dwelling,
Misery staring from every pane,
And vice and squalor crowding the door,
Whose open entrance look'd more repelling
Than if it were barr'd and grated o'er.
Under these horrors, under the ground,
Must the recent home of his little girl,
The home of the heiress of an Earl,
Must Alice' home be found.
Well might the Earl, well might the sire

Well might the man, as closer he drew
To his side the being whom but to view
Was to admire,
Shudder! And Alice shudder'd too—
From a cause not hard to understand.
So the Earl, as he press'd her hand,
Whispering said,
“Be not afraid!
It is only such eyes
As would look for you in this disguise,
That now your features would recognize.”
Had the Earl seen her that night on the stone,
In the dirty clothes she then had on,
With her famish'd face, so cold and wan,
He would not himself his child have known.

A policeman, who had ridden in front on the coach,
Now, with arms akimbo and affected air,
Half swagger, half strut, march'd up the lane,
Before the gentle pair;
A kind of herald of their approach
That had drawn the horrible rabble there
To watch the scene,
Even if the Earl's unusual mien
Had fail'd to excite their stare.
And the precaution was not in vain:
For the landlord would fain,
When brought at last to unlock the door
Of the cellar, himself its walls explore,

Suspecting some hidden gain.
But the officer, taking the man aside,
Found means to render him pacify'd.
So the man and the mob were kept outside,
While the Earl and Alice,
Alone descending,
The Earl his tall figure painfully bending,
While his trembling child held up a light,
Grop'd their way
Down in the narrow and filthy den,
Whose gloom to Alice' now disus'd sight
Was darkness many fold deeper than when,
Poor victim of a devilish malice,
She knew no atmosphere more bright
Out of the open day.

“ And in this never-changing night,
And in this stifling, deadly air,”
Said the stooping Earl with pain,
Turning round to the partial gleam
That found its way in at the open door,
Lighting the ruinous steps, no more —
“ For eleven years your sad life you bore,
While I! — Heaven, hast Thou not in store
Some vengeance for that monstrous crime?
But let me not complain!
Since I have my child again,
I will not count her sorrows o'er;
But the cruel past shall seem

The suffering of some frightful dream.
Yet eleven years!" — "Not all the time,"
Said Alice. How strangely the accents sound
Of that sweet voice in such a place!
The sire started, and look'd around,
Then turn'd again to the beautiful face,
With its faultless features so full of grace,
Now deadly pale, and paler seeming
In the yellow candle's sickly gleaming.
"Often a far worse lodging we found.
Sometimes we lay on the cold bare ground,
Under a shed. So that when, last year,
We found means enough to settle here,
This dismal place did not appear
What now it seems."

The Earl heard those accents' witching sound;
The Earl saw that faultlessly beautiful face,
Looking so pale in that frightful place
Under the candle's yellow gleaming;
And once again he turn'd him round,
Turn'd to the rotten and mouldy beams,
To the slimy walls with moisture streaming;
He breath'd the musty and stifling air.
"God forgive me!" he cry'd in a tone
Mournful and low, yet earnest withal,
"That I have ever dar'd despair,
That I have ever dar'd to call
Myself unhappy, who never have known

Until now what misery others bear !
Henceforth —— But let us now be quick
And find the treasure we come to seek ! ”

Alice turn'd about,
And near the angle of the further wall,
As the candle on it shone,
Pointed to a loosen'd stone,
Which with trembling hands the Earl took out,
And found a long shallow excavation
The hag had contrived to make, to hide
All she had to lay aside.
'T was a strange accumulation.
Rusty hairpins, bits of paper,
Some old brass buttons, a broken key,
In a batter'd saveall the end of a taper,
And other such kinds of trumpery ;
All of which in disgust the Earl let fall
As he drew them forth ; and last of all —
What means that flashing of his eye ?
Why does he utter that joyous cry ?
It is — Yes ! he draws from its hiding-place
The little sleeve, with its fringe of lace,
The remnant of lace which, tatter'd and small,
Unwilling to burn, and unable to sell
As she had the rest,
The hag had sav'd. The Earl knew it well.
In his lifted and folded hands he press'd,
Soil'd as it was, his precious prize,

Then, its dust shook out,
Carefully laid it in his breast.

“And now, my Alice! now,” he cries,
You are my child, past any doubt!
Come, darling, to my heart once more.”
The candle drops to the humid floor
And spluttering dies.
But in the dimness, which seems darkness,
None is conscious of a spark less
Of the light, for none has eyes.
But both hear a sweet low noise;
For Alice sobbing
On her father’s bosom lies,
On his bosom which is throbbing
With the sacredest of joys.

This endures a little space.
Then he lifts her from his heart,
And his kisses dry the tear
From her face. . .
“Let us leave,” he said, “this place.
But, my child, ere we depart,
It is fit that we should kneel
Even here—
You have learn’d, I know, my dear,
From your teacher that good part—
Even here
Where most we feel.”

So even there,
In that dismal place,
Spreading his handkerchief on the stones,
Even there,
In subdued yet earnest tones
The Earl with Alice face to face
Pour'd out his prayer.
The deepest perhaps he had ever said,
The happiest since that innocent time
When, ere he laid him down to sleep,
He nightly lisp'd the pious rhyme,
Kneeling on his little bed,
Which pray'd the Lord his soul to keep,
Living, or take it, dead.

IX

In the dim study all is still.
The Countess, bury'd in deep reflection
On a theme that wraps her wholly,
Has no wish nor thought of speaking.
Yet it is not melancholy;
For albeit her blue orbs fill,
And at times she even sighs,
There is nothing of dejection
On her lips or in her eyes.

Nor does Walter dream of breaking

On her mood by conversation.
Full of his own meditation,
Which is not of cheerful kind,
For his cheek is pale as death,
And his full lip often trembles,
And his manly bosom heaves,
With such thoughts as stop his breath,
Swell his heart and make him blind,
Thoughts whose pain he ill dissembles.—
You would say his spirit grieves
For some loss, past or to come,
Or that some o'erwhelming doom,
Pressing on it, keeps it aching.
Yet his future is now waking
Brave and bright
From long years of sleep and night!—
Full of his sad meditation,
Walter cares not to intrude,
Were it right,
On the Countess' pensive mood.
If he think of her at all,
'T is in fear
Her voice to hear
Suddenly breaking on his ear,
Calling on her host to speak,
Where he stands abstracted, dumb,
In the shadow of the wall,
And behold, the moment come!

With sparkling eye and glowing cheek,
Glowing from her feelings sweet,
The lady, stirring in her seat,
Beckons with her lovely hands,
With her hands so white and small,
Beckons Hervey where he stands
Leaning on the further wall.

So the painter,
Startled from his uncouth abstraction
By the rustling, sees the action
Of the lovely lady's hands,
Of her hands so white and small,
Beckoning him from his inaction,
And with a blush, whose streak grows fainter
Ere he crosses from where he stands
Leaning against the further wall
Up to the window where she is sitting,
Goes before her, and, as fitting,
Bowing, waits for her commands.

Her command !
With that voice, and in that tone !
She has but to make it known.
What is there in all the land
That he would not brave and do
To accomplish her demand ?
For the voice is Alice' own,
As the face is too.

Says the lady in friendly wise —
For she felt dispos'd to the painter kindly,
As indeed she had good cause to be —
Says the lady, “ Truly, I see
My sagacious lord
Acted neither rashly nor blindly
When to your charge he confided me.
Standing aloof in that sullen guise,
You need but the badge of a ponderous key,
And to glare askaunt with a gloomier frown,
To make me deem myself in ward.
Do pray sit down!
Come, in the absence of the Earl,
Tell me about my little girl.
Tell me all without disguise,
All that in your power lies,
Good and evil, tell it all.”

For one moment his eyelids fall.
Is it that the painter seeks
For his quicken'd pulse concealment?
See once more his color rise,
Look into his kindling eyes,
Now he speaks;
Of his joy is full revealment.
But of evil what to say,
Who has ever
Found in mind and found in heart
Gentle Alice like the clay

Which assists him in his art,
Moulded by his least endeavor ;
Evil! that had Alice never—
So he thinks and so declares—
Save the uncouth words and ways
Which at first the child had shown,
Feeble growth of seed chance-sown
In her earlier days.
He has pluck'd up all those tares,
And the goodly wheat has grown,
Whose full ears
His anxious cares
Have well requited.
Larger has he never known.
Thus his talk is all in praise.
And the mother hears delighted.
And no sooner has he done,
Than her questions she renews ;
So he cannot else but choose,
Even were it done with pain,
Tell his story o'er again.

In that same hour, at the very minute
Walter in impassion'd tone
To her mother makes Alice' virtues known,
To her sire does Alice, on their way,
Exaggerate his own.
Which of them finds most pleasure in it,
It were very hard to say.

For the third time hath Hervey the painter told,
To the unwearied mother's joy,
How the very sparrows, his hand had still
Found timid and shy,
At Alice's coming grew more bold,
Leaping up on the window-sill
And pecking the glass when she was by,
Lur'd by the looks of the gentle boy.
All being told which he has to tell,
Told twice over and once again,
The lady not only to hear is fain
But would see into Alice' ways as well.
So he leads her up, at her own request,
To the little room where her daughter slept.
With what virgin neatness were all things kept!
And lo, there the cushion nightly press'd
And at morn by her pious knees! And there
Her bible and her book of prayer!
The lady's looks more than words express'd
What pass'd in her mind, and her dark blue eye,
Which gratefully the painter's met,
Was not unwet.

Down to the artist's rooms once more.
There the Countess with new delight looks o'er
All the books of Alice' tasks.
With what proud joy, answering all she asks,
With what joy the painter then,
Bringing forth his precious store,

Book and copy, slate and pen;
From Alice' first attempts to spell
And her first to write,
Bringing forth his precious store,
With what joy !
Spreads them all in turn before
The mother of his gentle boy.
In her loving search the lady quite
Absorb'd, and the artist wrapt as well
In his pleasing care,
They hear not the knock at the outer door,
Nor yet the footsteps on the stair ;
And the sire and his child have pass'd the sill
Almost ere they are aware.

X

From his breast the Earl in silence took
And gave the Countess his precious prize ;
In silence ; but his sparkling eyes,
Ah how vividly they spoke !
Ah how vividly they spoke,
As he watch'd his lady's look,
In a joy that knew no bound.
Round his child his left arm wound,
To his heart the dear girl drew,
And his freed hand Hervey's press'd,
While the moment's glance he threw

An eager friendliness express'd,
As if he would have hugg'd him too.

Not for long the lady's view.
With more of rapture than surprise
Glowing in her lovely face,
She press'd the relic to her breast,
Eagerly, as her lord had done
In the vault, in his lifted hands ;
Then to Alice, where she stands
Folded in her sire's embrace,
Spreading out her arms, she cries,
“My child ! my child !” The words alone
Were touching; but in that rapt tone !
Ere the words are fairly said,
Has the tender Alice run,
With her own fond arms outspread,
And has laid her head upon
The throbbing breast where she had fed.

Silent stood with moisten'd eye,
Yet he smil'd,
Silent stood the happy Earl,
Gazing on his wife and child.
Were the painter's eyelids dry ?
Walter the painter stands apart,
Mov'd in mind as well as in heart,
For there is a lesson for his art
In the group of the mother and the girl.

See! the lady's right hand now
Lifts, and rests on, Alice' brow,
While her left hand lightly lies;
Palm and fingers, on her shoulder.
Alice looks — with such a smile!
As her mother's hands thus hold her —
Alice looks up with a smile;
But two bead-like drops the while,
Resting one on either cheek,
Something more than joy bespeak;
And you read it in her eyes.
In her eyes! What can be more
In the saints' whom men adore?
In the angels' there may be:
But have angels such as we?
Hither, infidel! and see,
In these eyes so mystic-sad,
Mystic-soft, and mystic-grand,
All the proof thou shouldst demand,
Were a thousand to be had,
To dispel thy doubts, — and own,
Man lives not this life alone!

Smiling too, not Alice' smile,
But a smile of love that told her,
More perhaps than even was wise,
All her delight, the Countess dries
With the small tips of her fingers
Alice' cheeks, and kiss'd her eyes.

Thus, admiring, in her face
Gazing yet a little while,
Silently the lady lingers,
Then with sudden rapture cries,
“ Darling ! ” and her arms enfold her
Once more in a close embrace.

Without other word,
Then to the Earl
The Countess transferr'd
The angelic girl.
Without other word ;
But her face the while,
As she look'd at her lord
With a meaning smile,
Express'd a triumph he fail'd not to share
In the beauty, at once both touching and rare,
Of his child.

“ And now,” said the father, as he smooth'd her fine
hair,
And caressingly smil'd,
“ Go, bid your preserver and friend, Good bye.”

Alice mov'd not. With a blanching cheek,
Not unobserv'd by her father's eye,
Trembling she essay'd to speak,
But her voice appear'd to fail her,
As her strength to fly.

Then pale Walter,
Turning paler,
Coming forward, and with pain,
While he try'd to look cheerful, but in vain,
Thus began :
“Lady Alice”— No more is spoke,
And his accents falter.
At the name, the titled name,
The spell that bound the maiden broke.
Bursting suddenly into tears,
All her shyness, all her fears,
Childish fears, and virgin shame
Then newly woke,
All forgotten, Alice ran,
Alice flew,
Into his arms so gladly spread
Her pliant form impulsion'd threw,
And sobbing said :
“No, no. I am not that!
Not yet to you.
Call me Alice ; I am yet
Your child — your Allen, if you will —
My second, my first father still ! ”

Down on the head
That lay upon the painter's breast
Silent fell,
Hot and fast,

The painter's tears. And Alice, sobbing,
Felt them glide upon her neck.

How long thus, without a check,
How long lost in her affliction,
Alice might have thus remain'd,
To his throbbing bosom strain'd ;
How long in that bosom's throbbing
Walter Hervey lost as well
Might have stood,
Unto all insensible
But the mournful joy to prove
Thus the depth of her affection,
Thus her lively gratitude,
Thus perhaps her dawning love
Though unconsciously express'd,
It were vain to try to tell ;
For the Earl,
Gently from the painter's breast
Lifting up the weeping girl,
Said, "My dear,
Your parting here
With your kind preserver is not to be
For ever. Let Mr. Hervey see
His lessons have not left you still
A child."

Alice look'd not up, and the tears
Which her large eyes fill

Blinded her ; but the words she hears,
And her father's tones ; and she feels in her heart
There is slight displeasure on his part.
But Hervey has both heard and seen.
He read it in the noble's eye,
And in his mien.
Then suddenly grew his own mien high,
Collected and cold.
Which the Earl to behold
Felt sorrowful exceedingly,
As sorrowful he well might be,
Knowing the reason why.

In this penitent mood,
Reproaching himself with ingratitude,
The weeping Alice he consign'd
To her mother,
Then with action kind,
And with kindly warmth of voice and look,
The painter's hand in his own hands took
As if he were a brother.
“To-morrow, Mr. Hervey, do not forget
To-morrow here to wait for me,”
He said aloud.
Listlessly
Hervey let
His fingers lie,
Listlessly as the Earl's they had met,
And when the speaker let them drop,

And seem'd to stop
For his reply,
Simply bow'd.

XI

He has plac'd the gentle girl in the coach,
As he could not but choose,
He has taken and given the last adieu,
And hastens back. At his approach,
The landlord, holding wide open the door,
Who never had been so polite before,
Bow'd graciously low, wishing him joy
“To have found such a place for that pretty boy.”
And the landlord's wife, who also stood there,
Curtsy'd, with reverence deeper still
For the friend of the Earl of Duttonville,
Well nigh to the ground.

Without a word, without a sign
In acknowledgment of these acts benign,
Which the modest pair,
Who had watch'd from their windows the parting scene
The Earl and Countess and Painter between,
Nor forgot the compliments given and taken
And the hands that were over the coachdoor shaken,
Took care to divine
As a natural rudeness one should always afford

To receive as his right from the friend of a lord,
The painter flew up the narrow stair
Almost at a bound.

Within his study, he lock'd the door,
And stood quite still,
At the very sill,
Listening to the wheels that bore
Away the light of his lonely cell,
Listening to the wheels, until
Their lessening sound
Was heard no more ;
Then suddenly deep darkness fell
On all things round.

As if stunn'd, he stood awhile
Motionless, and pale as death.
Then, as slowly his thoughts came back
Once more to their wonted track,
Walter said, with expression deep —
But he gave his words no breath —
“ I should rejoice ; but I am sad :
I should now smile ;
But I am more inclin'd to weep.
Is it that more than I had sought,
Than I could have dream'd might ever be had,
Hath crown'd my hopes this eventful hour ?
Is it that I this day have found,
Within my heart —

But let me stifle, as I ought
And reason bids me, that wild thought.
But reason, in this weakest part
Where weak man aileth,
What availeth?"

Down in his study, made once more lonely,
By Alice' chair
The painter kneeling,
In both hands concealing
His troubled face,
Sought for consolation there,
Where, and where only,
It never faileth
Man's mournful race.

His thoughts ascended
Thither where they were intended;
And the words which cloth'd his pray'r
Here can find no fitting place.

CHANT THE THIRD

I

The Rose, the Queen of Flowers, is sitting,
The Virgin Rose, upon her throne,
Deck'd in the robes her state befitting,
Color and texture all her own :
What subject flower can wear them ? None.
Look at her there upon her stem !
No other plant rears such a form.
In hue the loveliest Eastern gem,
In all Victoria's diadem,
Is not so delicate yet warm.
See, feel, her petals soft and fine,
Vein'd within and soft as silk.
As in the cheek of childhood blends
The tint of blood and hue of milk,
So that you cannot mark the line
Where this begins and that one ends,
So there the red and white combine.

* * * * *
Lovely, delicate, tender Rose !
What fragrance can with thine compare ?

Cradled among the leaflets green,
The sister bud beside thee seen,
Though tightly still her petals close,
New to the blanching sun and air,
From her red cone like fragrance throws,
(Undying odor, all divine! —
Even in thy wither'd leaf it glads,
Reviving-fresh, the sense,) and adds
Her sweets as loveliness to thine.

Yes, pride of flowers and peerless! thou
Art Queen of Summer, thou alone.
But summer glories soon are flown;
And thy brief reign is ending now.

The lark, that usher'd-in the Spring
Is still in song.
Up from the tufted clods among,
Where on her grass-built nest his mate
Patient sits with folded wing
Her second brood to wait,
Up from between the clods he flies,
High and higher to the skies
With eager bound;
And, as he soars, upon the ear
His glad notes fall more loud and clear,
The further from the ground.

Now might the fallow-finch beware,

Knew he St. James's day was come:
The tufts are set that hide the snare;
The young, which with unweary'd care
He help'd his ardent mate to rear
In their low-builded home,
Grown strong, become the shepherd's prey,
What time across the downs he sees
His twittering spoil in groups appear,
Flying against the western breeze
On some unclouded day.²

II

*
It is the season when the sun
In Leo floods the north with light;
But not the same we have seen begun
In our last song; for three have flown;
And Lady Alice' hair has grown,
Her silky hair of tender brown,
So wavy, long, and bright.
And Hervey's fortune now is made.
The Earl has done his promis'd part;
As much the story told has done;
And Walter, no more in the shade,
Admir'd, and recogniz'd his art,
Finds ease to follow honor won,
But ease in outward things alone,
Not ease within the heart.

Many times he has seen the maid,
At the Castle and in the town.
The feelings which had been kept down,
Undevelop'd, or had been stay'd
In their gradual but sure growth,
By her childhood, and her disguise,
And her dependence on his protection,
Which made his delicate spirit loath
To give emission in any way
To that pure affection,
Which she still redd every day
In his voice and in his eyes,
Often in his thoughts' direction
Studied in his features' play,
Redd, and got it all by heart,
With the instinct—not of mind,
To return the lore in kind
Better'd in each part,—
This feeling,—only then betray'd
In them both when put asunder
By a fate, that seem'd the harder
Since its mandates, unpredicted,
Suddenly must be obey'd,—
Now its nature was detected
Might no longer be kept under,
But prevail'd with equal ardor
In the man and in the maid,
Though the way each was affected
Differently was display'd.

III

When upon his noontide vision
Broke the image, calm and sweet,
Of the rescued wanderer standing
On that fairest spot, the landing
Where life's river makes division,
Womanhood and childhood meet, —³
Fairest spot! too soon forsaken!
Where the barge must be retaken,
And the river, rushing by
Strong and fleet,
Fleeter, stronger flows each minute,
Till the bark appears to fly,
And the pallid traveler in it
Sees the eddying rapids nigh,
Hears the cataract's roaring sound
O'er the steep where breaks the river,
Feels the frail bark reel and quiver,
Whirl'd around,
Toward the verge where it must shiver,
Downward with a bend and bound
Dash'd forever, —
When he saw her standing there,
On that flowery resting-spot
'Twixt the full and void of care,
In her new-found lot, —
Saw his Angel of the Morning

Glowing with a warmer ray,
Fore-shine of that perfect day
When all charms by nature's boon
Outwardly her sex adorning
Should be hers in beauty's noon,—
Then knew Walter well, the seed
Of that love the child had sown,
Germinating, deep indeed
In his soul its root had thrown.
In his solitude upspringing,
First alone with unmix'd gladness
Nurtur'd, then with joy and sadness,
As to be in coming years
With the heart-shower of his tears,
Had the plant to fullness grown,
Round his tastes and feelings flinging
Its sweet umbrage more and more,
Till his being was grown o'er
By the parasite there clinging,
Parasite that did restore
All it borrow'd, by its bringing.

So from all his friends retiring,
Noonday friends his fame had won,
(How the insects press, untiring,
Where there is a patch of sun!)
In the shadow of his soul
Sat the mournful painter, feeding

Thoughts of bitterness exceeding,
Bitter sweet, and past control.

Hence, when he saw his ward again,
Conscious of what in his heart was burning,
All his movements appear'd constrain'd,
Till the gentle girl look'd pain'd,
And, her large and starry eyes,
Moist with their suspended rain,
Sadly on his own eyes turning,
Turning with a sad surprise,
Seem'd his alter'd mood to plain.

Walter's soul beneath them reeling,
In his desperateness of feeling
Tempted almost was he, there,
There before her parents twain,
In their hearing as in their sight,
Thus his grief and joy to tell,
Grief which makes his heart to swell,
Joy that is despite:
“ Alice! Alice! O forbear!
Is it not enough to bear
All this pain and all this care,
Care which haunts me day and night?
Wouldst thou madden me as well,
Madden with delight? ”

It seem'd as if he saw, poor mortal,

Heaven's great gateway spread above,
And an angel in the portal
Beckoning him with looks of love,
But the want of wings to fly
Kept him gazing on the sky,
On the measureless heights which sever
Form from form,
While a voice as of the storm
From the earth appear'd to cry:
“Ever! For ever!”

Ever! forever! Ever asunder!
Ever far! and yet—so nigh!
To the artist's soul in thunder
Hourly came that awful cry:
Ever for thy reach too high!
But 't was joy to have her by;
But 't was rapturous to be under,
Even for an hour, as days before,
The selfsame roof with her once more.
'Mid the many forms there mingling
Over the thickly carpeted floor,
Could there be no mode of singling,
Where the footfall gave no sound,
Alice' step from those around:
Yet she could not pass behind him
But he knew that she was near.
Suddenly his nerves would find him
Supernatural power to hear;

And his flesh would creep and quiver
To his very topmost hair,
With at first an icy shiver,
Like the ague-chill of fear.
But he turn'd, and was requited.
Did she look, he thrill'd delighted:
Spoke she to him once or twice,
Ah! he was in Paradise.

'T is not then a theme for wonder,
That, despite the voice of thunder
Sounding ever in his ear,
Almost in despite his will,
Walter Hervey should be found,
Always when the Earl invited,
Or the Lady Duttonville,
Flying from his reason still
On enchanted ground.

IV

And fair Alice learns to see,
Learns too soon to see too clearly,
No more in the old degree,
Since the child has ceas'd to be
And the girl is woman nearly,
Walter loves her, but now dearly.

Loves her dearly? Ah! 'twas he —
Was it not? that night so dreary,
When she crouch'd all wet and weary,
Little thing,
Weary, hungry, wet and lone,
Crouching sat on the cold stone
Faint and shivering,
Took her up in tender pity,
When none other in the city
Listen'd to her moan,
Took her in his arms and bore her,
Bore her up, at risk of fame,
To his hearth and set before her
More than poverty could claim,
Set before her more than food,
Taught her to be nobly good,
Taught her how to pray.
Then his growing fondness for her!
Then that one eventful day,
When his hands and love restore her
All that malice took away.
Then the hour of separation: —
Not a moment's preparation,
Not a minute of delay:
On his neck she falls unhidden:
Is his heart too full to speak?
These his tears that fall unbidden,
Hot and singly on her cheek?

Thus the Lady Alice pondering
All the phases of her fate,
Since the last hour of her wandering
Till her present lofty state,
Pondering Walter's recent trouble,
Thoughts come o'er her of her own,
And his malady now known
Makes her own hearts-ill redouble.

At her chamber window leaning,
In the night-hours, ere her pray'rs,
In the moonlight shadows hiding
Burning blushes, though alone them
Might the angels see, and own them,
Angels haply by her biding,—
At the open window leaning,
In the moonlight shadows dim,
Lady Alice thinks on him,
And resolves his conduct's meaning,—
In the moonlight shadows dim.
There until the break of day,
When were done her gentle pray'rs,
Sits she through the summer night,
In her nightclothes all of white,
In the deepening shadows hiding,—
At her chamber window leaning
Till the day,
Solving till the break of day
The sweet riddle of his meaning;

Till the shadows upward sliding
Spread to darkness, and the ray
Came again as morning gray,
Sits she in the window biding,—
Thinking, thinking, always thinking,
Till the waning moon was sinking
And the lessening stars grew dim,
Thinking, thinking still on him,
First with rapture, then with tears,
On his love, and what appears
To her sense its ill-betidings,
Till the chilly morning gray
Warn'd her of her lingering stay.
But the rapture, ah the rapture,
Whose sweet thrills her senses capture,
But the rapture was abiding
When the tears were wip'd away.

No more now she dares to treat him
With the friendliness of old,
Stepping eager up to meet him
With one hand held out to greet him,
Or both hands for him to hold.
Scarcely yields she now her fingers,
And the touch no longer lingers
As if glad to meet his fold.
Then her eyes avoid his own;
And her manners, changing tone,
Seem at times constrain'd and cold;
And she shuns him when alone.

Wo to Walter! Deeply shaken,
Doubting, maz'd, his spirits sink.
He has watch'd the child too nearly,
Watch'd her long and known too well,
In the girl to be mistaken.
Has this girl, still lov'd so dearly,
Standing now upon the brink
Of her womanhood, forsaken
Truth and gratitude beside,
All her nature chang'd by pride?
Walter watches, doubts, is ill,
Knows not what to think.

V

On a day she sate apart,
('T was a day she had not pain'd him,) Hervey with a bounding heart
Sought her side. But, ere were spoken
Twice ten words with accents broken,
Alice, turning pale, restrain'd him,
Rising ere the just remainder
Of his sense his lips could utter,
While some plea her own lips mutter.
But the artist thus detain'd her,
With a look and voice of wo
Thus detain'd her:
“Lady Alice, is it so?

Have three little years so chang'd you ?
Comes this conduct of your will ?
Has my — constancy estrang'd you ?
Let me know."

"Chang'd me ?" In that voice, and tone !
How they through his marrow thrill !
"Chang'd me, Mr. Hervey ? No !
I am little Alice still :
Little Alice still for you.
What should make me seem untrue ?
And to you alone ?
Look at me. Then let me go."

Walter look'd. The truth was plain.
O those eyes so full of pain !
Full of pain and full of sorrow,
Sorrow for the pain she gave him.
And the mouth appear'd to crave him,
By its sweetly mournful smile, —
Whose rare loveliness the while
Seem'd from Heaven new grace to borrow,
New but still a mournful grace
From the Angels' dwelling-place, —
Piteously appear'd to crave him
Not to impute to her the sin
Of heart ingrate or selfish guile,
Or think she could be aught tomorrow
But what yesterday she had been.

Yes, she lov'd him! Yes, 'twas plain!
With a virgin heart's first love,—
Love all other loves above,
Lov'd the first, not lov'd again.
Yes, she loved him; it was plain.
And through throbbing heart and brain,
Not as sinks the summer rain
Through parch'd soil and swells the river
For a time, then leaves the plain
Dry, and scant the stream as ever,—
In his heart and in his brain
Sinks the influence intense
Time nor change can banish thence:
Wet the soil shall aye remain,
And the river, swollen ever,
Never shall flow scant again.

Alice, when she bade him look,
Meant no more than he should see
In her eyes her constancy
Legible there as in a book.
But their naturally tender
Mournful gaze her feelings render
So enhanc'd they now express
What she meant not to confess,
Deep impassion'd tenderness.
And his very soul is shook.

Well, that from his side she broke!

Well for him, and well for her !
In his ecstacy of feeling
Walter reeling,
Standing where the maid had left him,
Look'd as if she had bereft him
Of the power to stir.
But the many who were near,
And the few that were approaching,
Alice, by her scanty stay,
Drew with her another way
And prevented from encroaching.
But, of many who were near,
There was only one to fear ;
And when, joining her, his clear
Ardent glance upon her rested,
Alice' burning cheek attested
There was something in his stare,
As he gazed upon her there,
Consciousness with dread invested ;
Something searching in the stare
Of the young Lord Ernest Clare.

VI

It was strange perhaps, the Earl
Saw not what was in the girl,
Nor the Countess either ;
But he judg'd belike, she too,

Alice look'd as others do,
And would take another view
From the height where birth had plac'd her.
That a child's love should survive
Absence, time, and change of scene,
Be expanded or revive
In a passion which disgrac'd her,
Which the world would say disgrac'd her,
This, I ween,
Such perversity I mean,
This occurr'd to neither.

If he thought at all that way,
Thought the Earl of Duttonville :
“ Absence prolong'd for many a day,
Absence long and visits brief,
To this trouble will bring relief:
Worldly obstacles will kill
Other impulsions which obey
Nature as their guide and chief,
Or at least their effect will stay.
The rest will need but little skill,”
Thought the Earl of Duttonville.
“ Absence, time, and change of scene,
Change of scene, and absence, and time,
All of these lets will get between
Its distant object and the will,
And cut off this feeling in its prime,”
Thought the Earl of Duttonville.

So thought the Earl, or may have done.
Yet 'twas these obstacles thus thrown
Into the brook, to change its course,
Or choke up its scanty stream forever,
Had given its current a torrent's force
And swollen its waters to a river.

But parents' eyes too rarely see
Those passions they have ceas'd to feel ;
And love soon teaches the heart — Ah me,
That ever such fault in such passion should be !
The heart soon teaches, though it were free,
The freest heart that ever yet were,
From all that infringes sincerity,
Teaches its treasure to conceal.

Alice and Walter were rarest rare
In the world's rare truthful, the diamond few
Of the myriad millions that taint this air.
Both of them were so born ; and he
Had taught her, as best of the lore he knew,
To be in thought, word, action true,
And subterfuge to flee.
Alice, who lov'd as love all her sex,
Who ever love all, be it good or evil,
In those they adore, nor their brains perplex
To trace distinctions 'twixt saint and devil,
Alice the child had striven to share
Her protector's feelings, tastes, and thought,

And the openness which nature taught
Was thus inur'd to wear.
But now their passion rules; the danger
Of seeing the flaming sword expel
Their souls from Eden makes them tremble,
And craft, to which had been a stranger
Each heart, is welcom'd for a spell;
And both dissemble.

But sympathy anoints the eyes,
And passions still their like discover:
A lover may deceive a pair
Of parents, but not blind a lover.
The Lady Alice may be wise
And put restraint upon her will;
But jealous love is wiser still,
And sees through feint and cover.
And this most meaningly declare
The love-keen eyes of Ernest Clare.

VII

St. James's day has come and pass'd;
Yet fashion lingers still in town.
But the Earl's follies are his own,
And not the foibles of a caste.
The open fields, the forest dim,

The flowers that blush beneath the sky,
The lark which soaring sings on high,
Have all a joy and charm for him.
So from the streets he hastes to fly
To open field and forest dim,
To flowers that shed their breath for him,
To sky, and air, and light.

'T is the fourth year, as already is shown,
After the three that have gone unknown ;
And Alice' hair to its length has grown,
That silky hair of pale gold brown,
So undulous and bright.

Hence, to the Castle the painter goes
Invited by the happy Earl,
To put into picture his beautiful girl
With the best skill that he knows.

'T is the morn succeeding the day he had come.
And Walter stands in a large square room
In the modern part of the huge old pile,
And looks on a lawn on the flat of the hill
Where rises the Castle of Duttonville
With its wood that stretches a mile.
His canvas is fix'd to the easel ready:
His chalk, in the holder that keeps it steady,
Lies, pointed, by:
The throne is plac'd where the girl will sit;

And Walter, while his pulse beats high,
Waits to hear her step draw nigh,
Ere he shall turn to it.

Fair is the scene he looks out upon,
Fair and soft as ever yet one
Smil'd in the light of a summer's sun.
The single great window still open stood.
Beneath spread the lawn, in the background the wood.
A large round pool before this lay,
With no carv'd fountain, no jets that play ;
But the smooth-shaven grass, still fresh and green,
Crept to its marge, without border between ;
And on its full basin three swans were seen,
Whose snow-white shadows move on the lake
With not a ripple their form to break,
Save the tremulous lines that mark their wake,
As with oary feet stretch'd out behind,
Swoll'n breast and arching neck elate,
They steer their plumy ship of state,
And sail, and tack, and wind.
Shiftless as in a painted scene,
The shadows of the trees were seen,
For not a breeze their branches stirr'd,
And, save the rustle of a bird,
The very leaves lay still.
The fallow deer from out the wood,
Stray'd listlessly, or cropp'd their food,
Ere the sun, higher o'er the hill,

Should drive them to the forest glade;
And, save the swans, the bird, the deer,
Was nothing living moving near,
On lawn, on lake, in woodland shade,
And not a sound was heard.

Who does not love to think, in such a scene,
Whose beauty wealth alone can make,— for here,
Though nature always, it is nature trim,
And trimly kept,— who does not love to dream
The mind might be at peace, the thoughts serene ?
But not in tranquil images there lies
The power to lull the spirit in uproar.
Nor sunny landscape soft, nor cloudless skies,
Nor silence can the tranquil mind restore.
The heart's wild pulses only beat the more
In scenes like these where nature's tumult dies.

The painter's eyes the noble scene run o'er,
With all its calm :
The mighty wood, the silvery pool, the lawn
In its immense expanse, sublime and still :
But other fancies on his vision dawn,
And world-wise thoughts his wakeful reason fill
That yield no balm.
“ As well might yon wood to the water run,
And water and wood be united in one,
As he in his humble state
Win one so elevate,

An artist and landless, mate
Alice the heiress of High Duttonville."

Footsteps: He turns—his heart beats quick.
He turn'd him fast (his ear was quick,)
And met ere they had cross'd the sill
Passing through the open door,
His face to greet them flushing o'er,
Alice and Lady Duttonville.

The Countess led Alice by the hand,
Whose rare perfection best he knew
And best should know about;
That little, dainty, tapering hand,
With its transparent nails, and skin
All mottled pink and white within,
And tinted-white without,—
Tinted with the blood that flows
Under the fleshy gauze there spread,
While over each delicate joint the hue,
Transparent less, is deeper too,
And in the tips rose-red.
The Countess led her by the hand.
Its pulses Alice could not command:
And at their sudden bound and rise,
Which made to glow the throbbing fingers,
The lovely lady turn'd her eyes
From one to the other,
From her child to the painter,

Haply in doubt or in painful surprise.
If so, but a moment the emotion could taint her
Fair mind with suspicion, as the heart's dye grew fainter
In the flush'd cheek of either,
And pleasure was seen in the features of neither,
While the artist grew calm,
Though he cast down his eyes.
'T was the doubt of a moment, the pain, the surprise:
Or if there yet lingers
In the breast of the mother
Any sense of that qualm,
High breeding has taught her the expression to smother;
For she speaks in this wise:

“ Is it right? Will it do, Mr. Hervey? Do say!
I have brought our dear girl
I think in the guise
You prescrib'd yesterday: ”
(Round her own lovely fingers here winding a curl,
A tress of the mass her child's shoulders adorning.)
“ Speak candidly, pray.
To be sure, she is not now your Angel of Morning;
But I think she might sit for the Seraph of Day.”

With a grace all her own, with delight, with sweet pride,
(What a joy, when a mother such triumph can feel,
Nor envy the charms that detract from her own!)
She lifts with both hands, then lets fall, draws aside
The curtain of shadowy tresses; which strown

Over neck and on shoulder
Divinely enfold her
With their soft threads which hide,
Which hide yet reveal
By embracing their form,
Contours which fashion might veil not deform :
She lifts with both hands, then lets fall, draws aside
The beautiful tresses her fingers divide
Daintily one on either side,
Then kisses the brow of the down-turn'd head,
While Alice blushes a deeper red,
Blushes because of the eyes that behold her.

Well the mother saw not those eyes !
Their look had brought back all her pain.
But, when she turn'd, to her surprise
Their lids were drooping low again.
Was it to hide the orbs' warm rain ?

So the lady speaks agen :
“ But, Mr. Hervey, you look away.
Will you not now tell me then,
Whether our Alice shall retain
This mode of the hair ?
I mean, thus flowing ;
Or if you would have it another way ? ”

It may be, that the Countess, though always kind,
And never forgetful of what was owing

To Walter's goodness, nay, liking too,
As I have shown,
The man himself for what she knew
Of his feelings and sentiments like her own,—
It may be, in thus speaking then and there,
The Countess the artist would remind,
Delicately and with tender care
Of his natural pride, of the sort of tie
His act of protection had put between
Himself and Alice — *their Alice*, as more
Than once she had term'd his ward before,
Speaking while she was by.
Be this as it may,
That silvery voice
Which, itself bewitching, was Alice' own,
Alice's with a fuller tone,
Lost none of its magic then, that day,
On the musical sense of the painter's ear,
For the flattering terms of the lady's choice,
Spoken in that genial way,
Where courtesy and kindness vie,
Spoken by her then and there.
So the painter made reply.

“Loosely flowing thus 't is well:
'T was arranging, to derange it.
Only in one point I 'd change it.
As the Lady Alice' face
Wears a look of” — Once more fell

The painter's eyes. He paus'd. The space
Thus the Countess chose to fill :
— “Pensiveness.”

“ Much more I mean.

Might I be so bold to speak,
'T is that air of gentle sadness,
Sympathizing, tender, meek,
Which is seen

In the Lady Duttonville
Even in her hours of gladness,
Visible in both face and mien :
Charm the tongue can not express,
As with physical loveliness,—
It is more,—
But our soften'd hearts adore,
And our eyes confess.

In the Lady Alice' face,
Those deep sorrows which she bore
In her earlier years,
Years when plastic most the features
Soon are moulded to the trace
Of the habit of our natures,
Be it mirth or tears,—

In the Lady Alice' face,
“ Long-abiding wo has thrown
O'er this natural tender grace,
O'er this soft maternal sadness
Let me say,
Lady Alice' wo has thrown

Shadows of a deeper tone,
A sweet pathos all her own,
Shadows of a twilight ray,
Which no heart's ease can efface,
And no transient gleam of gladness
Wholly do away.

This sweet mournfulness was shown
In the Angel of the Morning.
Scarcely 't would be meet adorning
For a Seraph of the Day :
But it might
Happily with effect make known
The Spirit of Descending Night,
Should you so command."

"No ; it is a portrait now."

"So," said Walter, with a bow,
"So I understand.—
Hence, as best it suits this air
That the Lady Alice hold her
Head aside,
Drooping slightly on the shoulder,
Which will rise somewhat that side,
Next the light,
I would have the flowing hair
More unequally divide,
Heaviest namely on the right
'T wixt the pensive drooping head
And the shoulder,
O'er its hollowing slope descending

With a natural fall, and bending,
Not as led.—
Will the Lady Alice lean
On this pedestal?" ('T was one
Set up for the nonce.)

'Tis done.

Us'd before to model-sitting,
Able almost at a look,
Love-inspired, to read his meaning,
In an instant she had took
On the throne the posture fitting,
And is seen
Motionless on her right arm leaning,
With the left hip outward thrown,
Attitude whereby is shown,
As in part was Walter's meaning,
Beauty of a rare excelling,
Where all witcheries combine,
Rounded surface, faultless line,
Plianey, and that indwelling
Grace which art can not define,
Though what makes it, that I ween
Is of very simple telling:
Grace, not that of motion merely,
But the grace too of repose,
Charm without which beauty clearly
Were as unattractive nearly
As without its scent the rose.

VIII

It were hard, the wide world over,
Such another
Witching-lovely pair to find
As fair Alice and her mother.
So at least then thought the lover,
Thinking with an artist's mind.
Both had beauty, both had grace ;
But the Countess' mien and face
Wore a something more refin'd,
Something you could not discover
In the yet unripen'd nature
Of the other,
Though her charms, which, form and feature,
Fresher loveliness disclose,
Would delight you more beholding,
As the virgin rose unfolding,
Half its petals open holding,
Curving outward, curving over,
Curving over like a cup,
While its heart is yet shut up,
Has attraction ten times over
That which owns the matron rose.

Hervey with his artist-eyes,
Pleas'd, the shifting group runs o'er,
Where the Countess half before,

Half behind her daughter stands,
First arranging with both hands
The sparkling tresses as desired,
Then her right palm softly laying
On the model's drooping shoulder,
While her left hand still retains
With a beautiful delight
One of the golden wavelets playing
On the soft swell of the right,
Seems as if her lips are saying,
Though her eyes turn not to Walter,
“There, behold her !
Can she be enough admired ?
Is she not worth all your pains ?”

Admire ! Walter does much more ;
Swimmingly his eyes adore.
Fearing that his lips should falter,
Not a word of approbation
Said he, or essay'd to utter,
But, to veil his agitation,
Turning, clos'd the lower shutter,
Clos'd it with a hand unsteady,
Then return'd and slowly bow'd,
Saying, not with lips aloud
But with look, as thus he bow'd,
“I am ready.”

Alice young and Alice fair,

With that sunny pale-brown hair:
You will see, in that he closes
Only half the window's length,
Hervey thus his light disposes
All for softness not for strength.
Not for her a top-light small,
With its shadows sharp and bold.
So he draws the silken fold
Of the curtains to the wall,
And the linen blind lets fall.
Having thus dispos'd the tone
Of his art-light broad and bland,
Walter takes his chalk in hand,
And the Countess leaves the throne.

IX

Now beware thy throbbing fingers!
For thou scarce canst bear that gaze.—
For a moment yet he lingers,
While his eyes the lines explore
Which his pencil must go o'er.
At the instant when no more
His unsteady hand delays,
But begins the chalk to raise,
Lo, a valet at the door,
Who, the Countess motioning, says,
Standing, bowing lowly, there:

"The Ladies Blanch and Ethel Clare."

"And Lord Ernest?"

"With my lord,

Who just was riding out to take the air,
And drew his lordship with him, who would go."
(A shade of trouble darken'd Alice' brow.)

"We'll have them in, my love."

Said Alice, "No:

I could not keep this posture, were they by."

Then said the artist, taking up the word,
"The presence of these ladies would destroy
The expression quite."

The Countess, rising, then:

"The picture thus had better be deferr'd."

At this poor Walter felt, he knew not why —
'T was not his work's postponement, — great annoy,
Which mark'd the maid, and mindful of his pain
Listen'd but to the heart that in her stirr'd,
And said, "Mamma, 't were pity, it seems to me,
And wrong, now Mr. Hervey is in the vein."

So turn'd the Countess to the man again,
(She could not ever say her darling nay :)
"I will be with the Ladies instantly :"
And thus to Alice: "They have come to stay.
Presently they will want their rooms to see;
And then I will be back to you. — Till then
You need not, Mr. Hervey, make delay. —
Nay, do not leave your place for me, I pray ! "

The painter follow'd to the open door.
And when he turn'd, behold! once more
His model stood, precisely as before,
With head deject, and wistful mournful eyes,
And the deep pathos of that short sweet lip,
Her left arm drooping listlessly
Along the curve of the outswelling hip
That was so fine to see,
While still upon its rest the right one lies
Firmly, yet free.

He took his seat. Alone, alone with her!
Alone with her; thus looking on him too!
He dares one glance; his pulses wildly stir;
His eyes grew dim, he knew not what he drew.
Again he tries to look; he can no more:
The crayon-holder strikes the matted floor,
And the chalk breaks in two.

His burning palms strike passionately together,
And then before his filling eyes are spread;
And thus, regardless of the door or whether
His words might not meet hostile ear, he said:
“I cannot, Lady Alice! ‘Tis in vain!
I cannot paint you!” Then no longer lingers
The heart’s true utterance; down like summer rain,
But silently, beneath his outspread fingers
Trickle the big warm tears: nor now alone;

For Alice has descended from the throne,
And her heart's rain is falling like his own.

Upon his hands she softly laid her own,
And sought to move them from the downcast head.
“Walter!” she said,
Tremulously, in her delicious tone,
While trembled too the hand that on his own
Was lightly laid:
“Walter!” — ‘T was all she said.

Down drop the hands that hid poor Walter’s eyes.
“Alice!” he cries
Softly and low, in tones that trembled too,
The while her fingers to his lips he drew:
And on both knees he sinks before her,
Though better far his eyes and lips adore her:
“Alice!” he cries.
And that is all that Walter then replies.

And now, “In pity,” Alice says, “arise!”
And tries, though timidly, to free her hand.
And Walter, no more mad,
For Alice’ sake awakes to self-command,
Rising at once, as she adjur’d, not bad,
And, true to her and to himself most true,
Quickly, but in low tones and sad,
The while her fingers to his breast he drew,
“Forgive me!” says: “I know not what I do.

Alice! — So let me call you this time; 'tis the last —
Alice, what I have said and done was wrong —
Wrong toward you, your parents, and myself.
I am guilty *now*: but 't will not be for long.
O when I think upon that blissful past!
Those four brief months! — But that is thought of
self:
I must not, and I do not, wish you other
Than what you are now, though fate thereby has cast
Our lots asunder ever." —

Fast, more fast,
Fell Alice' tears; a sob she could not smother
Shook her slight frame; her head droop'd on his breast,
With all its sunny locks about it flowing;
And Walter for one moment fondly press'd —
How could he help it, honest though and true,
And mindful too
Of the regard that to her youth was owing,
Especially from him? a moment press'd
Her pliant waist, his left arm round her throwing
Over her curtaining hair; the next, distress'd
And seeming, for her sake alone, to rue
That act of weakness, said thus in her ear:
"Hush, Lady Alice! Lady Alice dear!
Hush for your parents' sake, who love you well.
The door is open; should one overhear —
Should your fond mother come! — Ah! that I fear!
Her anguish, her long doubting, who can tell?
Lift up your head — and hear me bid Farewell."

She lifts her head at once, and from her brow,
Flush'd with its long down-leaning, not by shame,
Puts back her shadowing locks, and straight became
Her visage deadly pale, while on his own
Bending her anxious eyes, in mournful tone
Of sorrow and pain and fright, amaze as well,
She echo'd falteringly his word : " Farewell ? "

" Farewell—and now."

Her hands are in his own again,
Her anxious brow,
Where down once more the parted tresses flow,
Contracts in pain,
And her sad eyes let fall in drops their rain
Single and slow.
But Walter still unflinchingly proceeds,
Though his heart bleeds : — *
" Here to remain
Would not be honest to my lord your father.
No! let me rather
My solitary home regain,
There to begin and haply to succeed
In rendering what is pietur'd on my brain.
And, be there need,
I can, some later hour, come here again.
But now! but now! Oh Alice, it were vain! —
Say to your lady-mother what you will.
It will be, well I know,
The simple truth; but yet no farther go

Than needs to explain to Lady Duttonville
My seeming rudeness unto whom I owe
So much. And now — and now —
Time presses — let me hence while yet I may."

"No, no, 't were better surely to regain,"
Poor Alice cries, "your calmness. I will go,
And easily my mother may detain
Till you are tranquil."

"No, 't were all in vain.
I should do o'er the same wild things again,
Before the Countess' eyes perhaps, and stain
What I would die ere blemish. No; delay
Is perilous to us both: I must away,
Now, even now,
For your sake, for your parents', mine. Adieu!
God keep you, Alice!"

"And you, Walter, too!"

Her voice was chok'd with sobs.
I know not how
The thing might happen, but, as Walter drew
The folded hands he held in his still nearer,
To his lips to press,
He met her mouth instead; and he, so true,
Who held high faith so dear, found love still dearer
And left on Lady Alice' lips his kiss.

X

Away, away,
Down to the stables like light he flew,
With throbbing heart and burning cheek,
And sign'd to a groom to saddle his horse
(He could not speak :)
And in five minutes more he was spurring his course
To town,—
Riding as never he rode so fleet,
As never perhaps he will ride again
Into or out of town ;
Riding so fleet
Perhaps because of his pulses' beat,
Throbbing with mingled delight and pain,
Perhaps to drown
Thoughts too painfully bitter-sweet.

XI

That night, the painter never touch'd his bed.

'T was past high noon of the ensuing day,
And Walter sat dejected, listless, still,
His elbow leaning on the window-sill,
The while on his spread palm reclining lay,

'Neath the rais'd sash, to catch the summer air,
Which stirr'd the uncomb'd tangles of his hair,
Reclining lay his head.

'T was past high noon of the ensuing day.
In thirty hours he had not broken bread,
Nor thought of food:

The morning's meal unmark'd behind him stood,
Nor had he sign'd to have it taken away.
His eyes, whose color look'd a darker gray,
Were in their orbits sunk and shot with blood,
And — trace of tears — the upper lids were red,
And pallid all his visage like one dead.

'T was past high noon of the ensuing day,
When Walter sat dejected, listless, still,
At his back window, leaning on the sill,
Appear'd there in his rooms, I need not say
No more the same,
But such as suited ample means and fame,
Appear'd, announc'd, the Lord of Duttonville.

Walter arose, nor reck'd his disarray:
But his face color'd, as he forward stepp'd
To meet the Earl half-way.

The latter held not out his hand.
He seem'd not angry, but his air was grave.
A firmness of the eye, collected, brave,
And heighten'd by the habit of command,
Adds to the seriousness his lips display,

Whose wonted look, though dignifi'd, was bland.
But not throughout the same high mien he kept.
Even now that he observes the disarray
Of Walter's dress and knows he has not slept,
Knows from his eyes that he has watch'd and wept,
His brow grows troubled, and his look severe
Softens to sadness, not unmix'd with pain.
Some thought perplex'd is passing through his brain.
Belike his debt for Alice comes to mind,
And Walter's passion for the rescu'd girl,
With its long growth, deep-rooted as was plain :
Trouble, conflicting duties. Who shall wind
The ravel'd skein ?

The artist plac'd a chair; and the Earl
In manner grave but not unkind,
Said: " You know why I am here."

Brave Walter then, — at first with agitation ;
But as he speaks he loses perturbation,
His cheek is flush'd, his voice grows strong and clear :
" That *I* am here, explains it. And, my lord, —
Let me without vainglory add this word, —
That I am here,
Shows that I know my duty, and unto it
Can bend my will."

" 'T is nobly said," quoth he of Duttonville ;
" 'T is nobly said ; but manfully to do it,

As you have done,
Was nobler still."

"Say, *desperately*, my lord: 't was that alone.
I fled to spare your heartstrings, and my own."

"Call it what you will,"
Rejoin'd the Earl of Duttonville,—
His cheek too flush'd, but with an angry feeling,
And his curl'd lip awaken'd pride revealing,—
"Call it what you will.
'T was well quick-ended, what was ill-begun."

"My lord!"—said Walter,—and said that alone.
But how he look'd! as back his head he threw,
Uprising in full stature from his seat;
And how his gray eyes shone!

The Earl was check'd, and said, in alter'd tone,
In kindlier tone, with accent sad and sweet,
The while his color went and came,
Now in, now out, like flickering flame,
Or April clouds that mock the view
With shifting shade and light;
And now he calls the artist by his name,
As he was wont to do;
The Earl resum'd with alter'd, kindly tone:
"You do remind me of the debt I owe.
I did you wrong: that freely I avow,

Freely and gladly, and as gladly now
I freely do you right.
But, Mr. Hervey, you should know" —

"Pardon, my lord, I know as well as you.
At Cressy's fight,
Five hundred years ago,
The first great Dutton was a Baron bold,
And by a Norman arrow was shot through,
Dying in harness ere the foe took flight.
Two hundred years from then completely flown,
Eight generations fully told,
The first man of my father's blood was known,—
Those gone before
Were I suppose obscure,
Mark'd but as others of the human fold,—
The first man of my father's name was known.
He was a chaplain in a baron's hall,
And died at Pinkie by a musket-ball.
Your lordship's grandsire was a wealthy Earl;
His lady's father wore the ermin'd gown:
My grandsire's wife was but a country-girl;
Himself gave physic in a country-town."

Another might have smil'd, even at the pride
Wherewith the heart-sore painter, in a tone
Which a slight dash of bitterness alone,
And nothing sharp beside,
Reliev'd from coldness, this droll contrast drew.

But the good Earl was one of very few,
Noble, as I have said, in more than name :
Not his the heart to feed his self-love's flame
With others' weakness, when his own he knew.
Perhaps sad Walter's sketch, though droll yet true,
Brought in more vivid colors to his view
The end for which he came.

But no longer frigidly,
Gravely he said,
Without affectation
And even with kindness,
While the proudly-rais'd head
Walter holds up still rigidly,
Which at first gave vexation,
He seems now to mind less :
"Mr. Hervey, you grieve me.
This detail needed not.
I have paus'd not, believe me,
So much as one minute
To bethink me of what
It would seem from your language you have not forgot.
But I have that to say
Which has brought me to town,
And the words you have utter'd teach me how to begin it.—
You can guess my affair with you.
Your — friendship for Alice,
(Forgive that I falter ; I speak without malice,)
Your affection for Alice

Will teach you to serve her.—
But come now, sit down,
And be calmer, I pray.
'Tis my duty to bear with you,
Though you rate me unduly:
You are still to the end
My daughter's preserver,
And as such my endeavor
While I live shall be ever,—
I say it with fervor,
So God me defend!
To show I am truly
Your debtor and friend!"

The painter is silent; but his eyes downward bend.
The Earl pauses a minute.
What he has to relate
Is so sure to give anguish
He is loath to begin it.
Seems his pride to abate,
And his spirit to languish.
He then thus resumes:

"Mr. Hervey, you know,
I 'm the last male left of that noble line
Founded by my sires
So long ago.
What then avail five hundred years
Of rank and fame ?

Should Alice die unwed, or if she wed
In any sphere that 's greatly less than mine,"
(His voice a lower tone assumes
As this he said,))
" With her expires
My ancient name.
When therefore back to my despairing tears
My child was given,
With every charm man's being that endears
This side of Heaven,—
Was given by you, I not forget;
When after three, how blissful, blissful years!
I saw her grow more wondrous yet,
I thought with happy heart elate —
What sire had not, so plac'd as I?
I might my lineage re-create,
And, through her generous issue, still
The Dutton of High Duttonville
Might time defy."

Walter his head dropt lower as he sate,
And check'd a sigh.

" The grandsire of Lord Ernest Clare " —
Hervey, to his centre shook,
Stirr'd unconsciously his chair, —
Not unmark'd of him who spoke —
" The grandsire of Lord Ernest Clare
Was my late father's fastest friend ;
The present Duke is mine ;
And through Lord Ernest I intend —

So Heaven should will —
My ancient lineage to extend,
And keep the title Duttonville
Still in my House's line.
This privilege, I have cause to know,
Will not be refus'd the Duke and me;
But the High Source whence honors flow
Will grant the title shall descend,
With all my lands in strict entail,
To Ernest and the issue male
Whom Alice as his spouse shall bear,
To Ernest and his issue male,
For Dutton chang'd the name of Clare,
In perpetuity."

Poor Walter's head droops still more low ;
And if his tears did not quite flow,
At least he could not see.
"Is it — Lady Alice' choice ?"
Asks he in a broken voice,
Nor lifts his head.

The Earl replies: "It is not yet."
And then in softer tone he said,
As if he held the effect in dread,
"We first must teach her to forget."
He took the artist's passive hand,
And adds, in accents winning-bland:
"Hervey, on you I can rely :

You are a man of noble soul,
Your passions under great control.
What would you do, were you as I ? ”

“ My lord, from me needs no reply :
You have done as other men would do,
As doubtless I should, were I you.
For what on me do you rely ?
Stand I in Lady Alice’ way ?
Am I in yours ?
Or can so mean a man as I
Be rival to Lord Ernest Clare ?
This then both you and him assures.
To-morrow with the dawn of day
I shall infallibly prepare
To quit for other scenes this town,
This very shore,
Not to return perhaps before
Your noble child is known to wear
A matron’s gown.
Will my whole duty then be done ? ”

“ Much more ! much more ! ”
Exclaim’d the astonish’d, grateful Earl,
In tones sincere,
Both Walter’s hands lock’d in his own :
“ You are the best man I have known
Ever, or far or near !
Had Heaven me given another girl,

I should rejoice in such a son.
Your duty, your whole duty done?
Hervey, my friend, 't is much, much more!
More than I ask," protests the Earl,
"More than there needs be done.
Why should you leave your native shore,
In selfmade exile to deplore
What you have done for me?
Enough, and much it is, I say,
Enough, that free
You leave my child's young heart to take
A new impression, while its clay
Is yet too soft to break."

"No, let it be, my lord, I pray.
I have no tie to keep me here.
My mother has left this world of wo,
My sisters were buried long ago,
My brothers three,
Who visit me scarcely twice a year,
Care too little I know for me,
To ask if I stay or go.
My friends are growths of a summer day:
They kept far from me while I was poor;
Now I am rich and no more obscure
They cannot keep away.
What is there then should my home endear?
It matters little where I am whirl'd:
I do not think that if on my bier

I lay to-morrow, in all the world
Would be two to shed a tear."

Both men were now standing. The Earl, still holding
Walter's two hands, his fingers folding
On both sides, now more closely press'd
Together the palms that in his lay.
Something he was about to say,
The unkindly doubts to deprecate
Which the painter's words express'd.
Walter his hands would draw away;
But he only drew them to his breast.
He turns aside, but turns too late:
A tear his pride could not command
Has found its way to the noble's hand.

The Earl was touch'd, was shock'd it may be,
By this evidence of a despondency
Which led the artist his lonely state,
In reality far from desolate,
With such distemper'd eyes to see.
But he would not venture to such as was he,
A man so proud, and so masculine truly,
Albeit the wo of that sleepless night
And fasting unduly
Had put his nerves in a wretched plight,
He would not venture to such as he
To proffer a useless sympathy.
He releases his hands: Walter walks away

Down the room. When his steps return,
His teeth are set, his brow is stern,
He is all the man he was wont to be.
There was almost defiance in the way
He rais'd his head and fix'd his eye.
Which the Earl took however in proper part,
Judging it, as it was really,
The effect of his struggle with his heart.

“Mr. Hervey,” he said, “again I must try
To divert you from this unweigh'd design.
Why should a man like you despond?
In you I see such powers combine
As bid you hope in any line
Of life to rise.
Is love descended from the skies?
Ambition is not less divine.
Hers are the longings never die.
The heart grows tired of being fond:
When clomb the spirit yet too high?
Strive to be great in more than art.
Choose your own walk, or suffer me
In your behalf that choice to make,
Where, for your own and country's sake,
It ought to be.
To level and make sure your way,
Will be for me — ah, need I say?
A grateful part.

So shall I lighten, if I may,
That debt I never all can pay,
That happy debt to you.—
There is— Be not impatient, pray !
Permit me to pursue.
There is — Do hear me ! ”

“ No, my lord —
You must excuse me — not one word !
Look round you. ’T was not in these walls,
With their grand spaciousness and show,
You found me with — you found my home
Three little years ago.
Then I was lonely ; now there come
Of various sorts so many calls,
Business, sight-seeing, friendly show,
I might, without much charging, say,
For me the house-door knocker falls
A hundred times a day.
To my own hand ’t is true I owe
In part this change, or ’t were such shame,
'T were better I were dead :
But from your influence first it came ;
Without which, well it might be said,
I should be still unknown to fame,
Perhaps were wanting bread.
Thus then, if recompense there need,
For what was more my fortune than my deed,
Thus then am I repaid.

Speak not of more to me, I pray:
If the best office in the land
Were yours to give condition-free,
I would not take it at your hand:
My art has been, is, and shall be
Henceforth the all in all to me.
But one reward — this will I say "—
The artist thus proceeds to speak
With soften'd tone and glowing cheek —
“One has been mine besides, is still,
Being what no fate can take away,
Whether or good or ill.
It is that I have known to read "—
His voice and mien are bold again —
“Read her thoroughly, heart and brain, —
Joy which nothing can exceed,
Knowledge not in vain !
To have seen alone were much to tell, —
Your daughter. Earl of Duttonville,
You now should know your daughter well :
If there be angels out of Heaven,
To you an angel has been given ;
And to that heaven which here on earth
She makes for those who gave her birth
I bid — farewell.
To-morrow, with the rising sun,
I shall assuredly prepare
To do, what earlier had been done
But that I lack'd the means betimes

To con my art in foreign climes.
But tell me — let me — may I dare
To ask, will Lady Alice find
All that she should, in heart and mind,
In the Lord Ernest Clare ? ”

Much embarrass'd the Earl reply'd :
“ He is so young ! and youth will show
Unruly temper and headstrong pride,
Which lessen in riper years. I know
Of nothing to disapprove beside.
But passionately he loves my girl —
As who loves not, that sees her ? ” (Who ?
Echoes in heart poor Walter too —)
“ And by this affection,” quoth the Earl,
Hopefully, but he look'd in doubt,
“ His kindlier qualities made to grow,
These foibles in time will be rooted out.”

“ God bless them both ! ” said Walter, stout
In his loyal heart : “ wherever I go,
I shall be happy to think them so.”

The Earl shook heartily his hand.
“ Since go you will, you shall command
My best of service. Let me know,
To-morrow, what is to be your tour.
Besides the letters yourself will take,
I shall despatch, to every land

You visit, missives of such tone
And purport as must needs procure
You more than welcome for my sake
And for your own.
You shall be, Hervey, receiv'd, rest sure,
As never artist was before."

" Yet Rubens twice was an ambassador;
And Leonardo's long life had an end
In a crown'd monarch's arms. These were of yore;
But gentle West was, we are told, preferr'd
Above his courtiers as a worthier friend
By our Queen's grandsire, honest George the Third.
If painters are not noble, you will see
Their art at least is noble, or should be."

" Is not this captious ? " said in kindly part,
The kindly Earl. " You have gain'd, so very late
As yesterday, a conquest o'er your heart :
Why will you let ill-humor rule you now ?
'T was eagerly I spoke, and well you know
That eagerness is prone to exaggerate.
Were you the humblest in your line, I vow,
As often I have vow'd before,
You, Walter Hervey, still should be
Among my foremost friends to me
For evermore.
Will you deny me, who intend
To do by you as by a friend

For whom I care ?

The letters which your way precede
Will give you access where you need
Still more than those you bear.
Nor only this, the first beside
Will take precaution for that pride
In which, I must take leave to say,
You very much exceed."

" You are most kind, my lord; but still,
I shall not visit. What the need
My way then to prepare ? "

" They will not harm you ? "

" No indeed."

" Why then pray let me have my will.'
Rejoin'd the Earl of Duttonville.
" Somewhere you will have room to spare
To stow my little parcel. Come,
You shall not otherwise quit home.
Not I, nor Lady Duttonville
Alone, but Alice, think ! as well,
Will better be content to hear,
Not only in his artists-sphere,
Great although there may well be styl'd
The part you fill,
Will Walter Hervey now appear,
But as the tried friend of Duttonville,

The preserver of his child.
Have I your promise? Shall it be?"

How could it else, when so requir'd?
So with some words said soothingly,
And intimating he should see
Again the painter ere he went—
Promise not kept, though truly meant,—
The Earl retir'd.

XII

And now he was gone,
Ponder'd Walter what he had heard.
Distrust and sorrow his bosom stirr'd
To add to the pang which already begun
At times to move him for what he had done
For Alice' sake and for his own,
Though therein he had not err'd.
"A tender spirit like hers to be tied
For life to one like Lord Ernest Clare's!"
And then its tempting image uprears
The thought of the love Alice could not hide;
And even her sorrow's pain and tears
Have an attraction, which defy'd
His will to put it quite aside,
His conscience and his fears.

And with the thought a dislike, it might be
A feeling even of jealousy,
Against the suitor the sire had chose,
Notwithstanding the blessing he just had pray'd
Alike on him as on the maid,
In Walter's mind so malice-free,
In Walter the painter's mind arose,
Though not very long the emotion stay'd,
Nor was felt to any great degree.

But had he known all, Walter would have seen
Some cause for his dislike I ween.
'Twas the young lord Ernest had told the Earl
Why the painter so suddenly fled :
The sorrowful girl
Not a word had said,
More than to give her mother to know
That her once kind friend had persisted to go,
Unable to paint her, as he averr'd.
Not more the Countess ask'd her to tell :
She felt her tears, her tones she heard,
And understood her child too well,
Understood so far as she heard :
The simple incident of the kiss,
That had the girl overlook'd I wis.

CHANT THE FOURTH

I

The large jagged leaves are dying
On the stems of the gadding vine,
Daily growing more yellow and lone.
Many already are lying,
Both of the dead leaves and dying,
On the ground of the vine-plots strown,
In the vineyards of the Rhine.
For the clusters, now hanging apparent
'Neath the thinn'd leaves of the vine,
No longer a shelter need
On the vine-hills of the Rhine:
In multiple masses coherent,
Where nor shadows nor lights exceed,
But, wonderful fair indeed,
In unity combine,—
In harmonious masses coherent,
Their berries, grown white and transparent,
Show the dark spot of their seed,
In the vine-plots by the Rhine.
The cicala's shrill love-call, which, growing
As shortens the sunlight less shrill,

Is daily more broken, thus showing
Her life with the warm days will close,
A drowsier feebleness shows,
And ere many nights will be still.

'T is the saddest yet sweetest of seasons,
The poets' and painters' time,
When the Year, no more in his manhood,
And far from his jocund prime,
Stands awhile on the verge of the hilltop,
Looking down on the valley of Age,
Where the rains are already descending
And the snow and the hail shall rage ;
A dreary way and a sad one,
And painful, which yet must be trod,
Till the old Year is bury'd forever,
And the new one is born of God.

II

'T is a twelvemonth and three months more
Since the crisis we late made known.
The warm pleasant days are not o'er,
But the dry tepid nights are flown ;
The dews gather deeper, and soon
In the daylight will glisten hoar.

The rich island tourists are tending,

Some, to their homes in the west,
Others their glad way are wending
To climes which they deem more blest,
Where the sun loves to linger, is warmer,
And the rain-clouds seem loath to rest.

Of these — not mere tourists for pleasure;
They travel lost health to regain:
Vain hope! that again and again
Sends hundreds, like seekers of treasure,
In discomfort to wander,
In sorrow, in pain,
While bootless they squander
The stock they retain;
And the more it is vain,
So hope grows the fonder! —
Of these — ah, no tourists for pleasure!
But the blessing of health to regain —
A party of four, with a train
Of the usual domestics attending,
With solicitous slowness, not leisure,
To the plains of Italia are wending.

They are persons of rank. One of the four
Is a girl, who absorbs all the others' cares.
By a strange misfortune her earlier years
Were pass'd in such misery, never before
Perhaps upon all the earth
Had one of gentle birth

Such to deplore.
The evils which then she bore,
Hunger, half-nakedness, damp and foul airs,
Sow'd deep in her system the seeds of disease,
Which, ready to germinate,
The nerve-crushing weight of a mind ill at ease
Has given their growth of late,
And that at a fearful rate,
Not by degrees.

On her seem forever
Both her parents to gaze,
Sadly and lovingly;
And with a like constancy,
Seeming forever,
Though their lids quiver
And orbs often blaze,
The eyes of another,
One who is not a brother
Yet with the three stays.

But to the first ever answers the maid,
With a smile so dejected at once yet resign'd,
So full of a beauty of wo, of such kind
As might on the lips of an angel have play'd,
Could we deem there could be
An angel so suffering, sunk not dismay'd,
Heart-sunk and frame-shrunk, so sunken as she,
That both of the parents turn often aside,

But mostly the father, the tear-drops to hide
Which they dread she should see.
On the youth she looks not.
He seems disregarded, if not quite forgot.
And as he remarks her cold mien (not disdain)
And even aversion, he often gives spur
To his steed, or else purposely loiters behind,
To conceal, or give vent to, unnotic'd by her,
The rage and the anguish which darken his mind
With a whirlwind of passion he cannot restrain.
For the party have chosen for the sick girl's good,
And the charm of the pleasant scene besides,
Not the rapid rail but the olden road,
And on such occasions the lover rides;
Which at once for the invalid's ease provides,
And suits his fiery mood.

They are now on their way
(As slow they journey on to Lombardy)
From Erbach's modern castle, good to see,
To where, high o'er the Neckar's lovely flood,
The Pfalzgraf's ruin once in grandeur stood,
And in fair Weiheim for the night will stay.

III

Beside the road, upon a large stone there,
Sits a tall figure, easy to descry.

Not that alone
It sits there single, and though crouch'd sits high,
But that there is a something really
To arrest the attention of a passer-by,
In that tall figure's manner and her eye.
For 't is a woman. But the coach rolls by,
Too full within of sorrow of its own
To reck a stranger's trouble; and the knot
Of maids and lackeys in the hinder coach,
Who mark'd her shrink and cower at their approach,
And hide her features in apparent fright,
Proclaim'd her face too ugly to be shown,
And, laughing at "the quizzical old crone,"
The shape forgot
Before its lines had melted from their sight.

The youth was in the rear, with lower'd brow
And lip compress'd, and spurr'd and check'd his steed,
Mad with his torture, all unmark'd indeed
Of those before, not by the crone, who now
Upspringing suddenly, with hurried look
Thrown on the vehicles, her station took
Right in the rider's path,
And barely 'scap'd the shoulder of his horse.

With mix'd surprise and wrath
The youth drew up and wav'd her from the road,
But wav'd in vain:
Unmov'd she stood;

As resolute to intercept his course,
And stretch'd her hand to grasp his tighten'd rein.

"I want you," said in English firm and plain
An English voice.

He threw a florin: "There!"
And wav'd his hand impatiently again.

"I said I wanted *you*," with dauntless air
Return'd the woman.

"*Me?*" in huge disdain
The youth reply'd: "What know you then of me?"

"You are the lover of the feeble girl
In yonder coach, accepted by the Earl,
But scorn'd of her, for whom you 'ld gladly die.
There is but one can make you twain agree,
And that is I."

"You?" cry'd the youth, and laugh'd, but scoffing
laugh'd,
Seeming as one who had drunk some bitter draught.
"Come, let us see!"
Scoffing he spoke, and with contemptuous air
Put with his riding-switch her bonnet back,
And with like action from her brow her black
And partly grizzled hair.

She own'd perhaps of years a double score,
But look'd in feature full a half-score older,
Or even more.
The lines were handsome, but scarce feminine,

Or, if they had been, years of misery's pine,
And brooding hate and rage had given a bolder
And harder edge to what at first was fine,
And made her stern where Nature meant to mold her
But sharp and cunning. Lo ! the mouth's short line
Grows longer and the corners more drawn down,
The low brows gather in a closer frown,
The small black eyes dart out a baleful fire
More like a tigress' than a woman's ire,
At the young horseman's action. This he saw,
But reck'd not, watch'd her tremulous fingers draw
O'er her bronz'd front the dirty bonnet's fold,
Mark'd at a glance the color of her gown
And cut, which not of rustic fashions told,
But spoke some vulgar dweller in a town,
And said: " You are of gipsy blood, 't is clear ;
But Satan only knows what sent you here.
A coroneted coach all eyes may tell.
The rest is merely guesswork. Fare you well."

" Stay yet, my lord. If I be then alone
A gipsy, there's your guerdon by yon stone :
Why don't I lift the silver and be gone ?
Hear me. Some fifteen years ago, the Earl,
That same proud lord who now is journeying there,
Lost by some oversight his child and heir,
That very pale-cheek'd girl
Who drives you to despair.

If him I name the Earl of Duttonville
And her the Lady Alice, doubt you still?"

"All which may well be known, and yet — Pah!
go!"

"You would not win then Lady Alice? No?"

"Win her! But, woman" —

"I have urg'd before,

I am no fortune-teller. Would you more?
Give me elsewhere a half-hour's talk with you,
I'll prove beyond a doubt my promise true."

"And that?"

"You win the lady you adore."

The noble's pride revolts. But straws may save:
So thinks the wretch who struggles with the wave.
There was a firmness in the creature's eye
That flatter'd hope yet baffled scrutiny.
"But what your object?"

"Make it what you will:
It is not *I* aspire to Duttonville.
Perhaps I hope for money: and indeed
That I shall need,
And largely. What is that, so you succeed?
Or even say I look for other meed?
At all events my motive is not greed.
That you shall judge; but neither now, nor here.
Do I mistake you? has your lordship fear?

Fear of a woman? As you see me now,
So I shall meet you."

On the youth's flush'd brow
The red grew crimson. "Peace! Where shall you be?"
"Where goes the Earl?"

"To Weinheim."

"That for me

Is handy; 'tis my bed-place." To the sky
She raised her eyes, then dropp'd them and look'd round.
"'Tis now high noon. Two hours hence be you nigh
The large mill where the valley path ascends
And flows the Weschnitz. There I will be found.
You shall be happy ere this daylight ends."

He gaz'd her steadily in the eyes awhile,—
Then smil'd incredulous,—then, with hopeful smile,
"I'll meet you," said, a frederic to her threw,
Struck with his spurs his steed and o'er the highway flew.

The hag look'd after; first, exultingly;
Next glar'd anew the tigress from her eye:
This follow'd a strange wreathing of the lip.
She rais'd both coins and in her pocket stow'd,
Then, with a masculine and rapid step,
Erect and resolute, triumphant strode
In the wake of the low-flying dust, whose thin billows
yet show'd
Where clatter'd the galloping horse-hoofs still audible **on**
the hard road.

IV

At the selfsame time, were already come
To Weinheim along the valley from Dromm,⁴
Alike fam'd Heidelberg to see,
Another party, that number three.

They travel on foot,
And for the same reason they chose this route,—
They are artists. One is of English birth;
The others claim here their natal earth.
And the English one is very sad,—
As sad as ever a man can be;
For never a man had more cause than he,—
Never one who apparently
Had such reason to be glad.
At times, in the midst of his friends, he sinks
Into a sombre reverie,
When all things round vanish from his view;
And when they ask him on what he thinks,
(But this, from regard and sympathy,
They have ceas'd of late to do,)
He sighs, and says: “Nothing.” And that is true.
His spirit is wrapt in a sort of dream;
And his full heart in that heavy sigh
Finds a relief unconsciously,
Or so at least would seem.

V

Now it so befel,
When the English gipsy and English lord
Met behind the mill,
The English artist lay^{*} on the sward
By the Weschnitz rill.
What he ponder'd 't were vain to tell.
He lay all alone,
Stretch'd with his back to a large long stone.
Around were many wild trees growing,
Their crooked boughs above him thrown,
While at his feet the turf was sown
With tangled bushes thickly growing;
Before him was the streamlet flowing.

The gipsy led the noble on,
Diverging from the beaten road,
Until they both directly stood
Behind the large long stone.
The valley sloping where she led,
The rock was even with her head.

The artist, leaning on his hand,
Wrapt in his melancholy dream,
His eyes upon the falling stream,
Which yet he saw not, no, nor heard,
Lay still as he were dead,

And knew not they had taken their stand
Behind him, nor a single word
Receiv'd of what they said,
Until the Lady Alice' name
Thrill'd through his brain and shook his frame.
The springy sod whereon he lay
Told not the movement when he stirr'd ;
Or had a sound been overheard,
So light it was that one would say
It was perhaps the breeze's play
Wantoning in the wooded hill
Or rustle of a bird.
And first, the thought to listen came,
And then, the feeling that 't were shame ;
But when some dangerous words were said
That hinted at a desperate game,
To listen seem'd but to fulfil
A duty, not an act of will,
And so upon his grassy bed
He lay quite still.

A voice whose tone seem'd to him known
Said, "No! The Earl of Duttonville
Will never throw her thus away!
A painter has indeed his day,
But 't is a day for him alone;
His race is not the less obscure.
So there you throw away your lure.
Is 't all you have to say?"

Had the disparag'd artist took
A glance then over his rocky screen,
In the woman's face he would have seen
A devilish, exulting look.
Until that moment she did not know
Aught the young lord had suppos'd her to ;
She had but guess'd his wo.
She now must tempt him to pursue,
And thus reply'd :

“ That is very true.

But does, my lord, a young girl's love-bent
Take its course from her sire's consent ?
If so, it is something new.”

“ Peace, you hag ! who talk so well —
(I know not where you got the skill :)
You touch me sore.
That fellow moulded her to his will,
When he found her an outcast and took her in,
To become the heiress of Duttonville.
He has got before,
And has won her all : I have all to win.
I see her pining day by day.
Her parents think it is decay ;
But 't is for him who is away.
This must I daily see ;
While turns she from me more and more,
Although she knows that I adore.
I would that I could set me free !

But ah! I love that girl so well,
There 's nought in Heaven or in Hell
I would not forfeit or embrace—
So help me God!
Could I but see once in her face
One answering smile, the faintest trace
Of warm regard for me!
Curse on it!" — Here he stamp'd the sod,
As if he felt it a disgrace
To have made such thoughts so free :
"Curse on it! what is this to *you*? —
Why have you brought me to this place?"

"To hear not what I knew,"
Replied the subtle hag, thus told
All she had wish'd him to unfold,
And hopeful augury from it drew :
"I am here to make my promise true.
Have you but courage for the plan,
As fits a lover and a man ? "

"Quick! or I leave at once this spot."

"Then quickly : There is but one way
To win the heiress of Duttonville.
It is — to force her to your will."

"What! Dare you? — Have you quite for-
got?" —

“Pray do not stamp again!
There’s nothing bad in what I say.
Will Lady Alice love you ever,
As now you woo? Go, coax that river
To flow back in its mountain-bed:
Perhaps with patience, toil and skill,
'T were not for human art in vain;
One might at least the adventure try:
But she will sooner die unwed,
Is dying now, 'tis plain.”

(The artist, choking where he lay,
Scarcely suppress’d a sudden cry
Of wonderment and pain.)

“ You will not let her pine away?
Weak maidens of her tender years
Are often best with rudeness woo’d,
Assume a merit for their fears,
And learn to love the stronger mood
Which, reckless of their cries and tears,
Compels them to their good.”

“ Insolent hag! And this to me?
Of Lady Alice Dutton too?”

“ My lord, you are not bound to agree.
I tell you merely what should be.
If you would still your own way woo,
And let her love her artist, do!
It is not I will grieve, but you.”

"Devil! What is your plan? Pursue!"

"My plan?

'T is in a word, and simply, Be a man.

Carry her off this evening through this wood."

The youth laugh'd harshly with his bitter laugh.

"Carry her off!" he cry'd: "That is too good!

You are back at least a century and half,

My dear old lady. As the world now stands,

Were I so crazy, how long should I run

Where other legs ran faster than mine own?

Not now the time when in these German lands

Each baron play'd the robber at his will.

Jove! 't were a jolly sight to see me fly,

The whole town following, with hue and cry,

To back the wealthy Earl of Duttonville!"

"Some fifteen years ago,

All England would have back'd that wealthy Earl.

And yet he lost, as all grown people know,

His little girl.

Say but the word,

Stint not their pay,

I know of those will hide you many a day,

Though Hessè, Baden, all around them stirr'd.

It is not you, my lord, should run away.

We seize the maid; you follow in pursuit;

And then you take such measures as best suit

The part you choose to play.

You now have heard.
If rather you prefer to let things run
Their old course on,
Amen, my lord !
I have kept my promise; no great harm is done;
I can be gone."

" And is this all your plan ? It is absurd !
And more, 'tis vile. I will not have it so."

" Then fare you well, young lord. But, ere I go,
Permit me yet one word.
The rare occasion now is all your own.
The bird once flown,
You 'll whistle it back to you in vain :
I will not make my offer o'er again.
You love, or you do not: and if you do,
Will you do nothing all your days but woo ?
I should, I think, be bolder were I you.
You would possess her; she will not be won :
Then seize her like a tiger; it is done.
What is it gives you fear ? 'T is not the Earl :
He longs to see you wedded to his girl.
He can but chide you that your way was rough;
More likely he will think you proper stuff.
Or can it be the artist ? Is he near,
That you have there an obstacle to fear ? "

" *Fear?* and in *HIM?* " The speaker's voice rose high

And grating laugh of bitter mockery:
“ I would indeed *that* obstacle were nigh
Where you stand now, no witness but the sky
And trees and stream! Then either he or I
Would on the spot — But to your scheme. Pursue.
Show it but feasible, I’ll dare and do.”

There was a moment’s silence. Then again
The woman spoke. “ This place will answer well.
Before the evening shadows from the plain
Mount to the hill-top and obscure the dell,
Persuade your party to come here to see
The Birkenauer vale: its scenery
Tempts strangers; but the path is mostly free
From other travel. Here, where now we stand,
Three men, bold fellows both in head and hand,
Will lie in wait, and when your people pass,
The rest on foot, the lady on an ass,
As is the wont” —

“ Stop! ” cried in angry tone
The haughty youth. “ No rascal’s hand shall dare
To touch the Lady Alice! That I swear! ”

“ There needs not; I can do it,” said the crone.
“ It is indeed a portion of my plan,
Here to be present, in disguise a man:
’T will fit me well. What! does my lord give out?
Faint heart, you know. But if you have a doubt,
This can your lordship do:

When you pursue
And take the Lady Alice from my arm,
You need not follow where the men will lead,
Her captor, and her conqueror indeed,
But, soothing her alarm,
Act as her generous rescuer instead,
Her saviour both from outrage and from harm.
Perhaps she will requite you as she did
Her first good shepherd, or his meed exceed,
Who took her when a lambkin to his fold,
And love her new friend better than the old."

" You madden me ! Name not the hound again !
You seem to take a pleasure in my pain !
But yet your sneering nerves me. There — your pay :
The earnest only. If this night — But stay !
How know I, woman, that you mean me fair ?
Mean Lady Alice fair ? I know you not."

" That is soon settled. If, my lord, I put
My safety in your hands, you well may dare
Confide awhile your honor unto mine.
That shall be done. But you have yet to dine ;
Which leaves you but few moments to prepare :
And I have still less leisure for delay.
Let us go hence. Upon our backward way,
I will explain " —

The voices here no more
Were audible.

Up from his grass-laid floor
Arose the artist (who, it will be seen,
Was Walter Hervey ;) up he rose with care,
And, looking warily above his screen,
Saw through the trees what finish'd his dismay —
Although he saw but what he look'd for there.
It was — the style of head, the very air,
The shallow Spanish cheek and blue-black hair,
Of his fierce rival, young Lord Ernest Clare.

VI

What shall he do ?

If he go to the Earl and reveal what he knows,
This will not believe him ; the rivals are foes :
And Lord Ernest his chosen-one too !
Should he tell him the plot, while concealing that name,
Yet the gypsy is seiz'd and the end is the same.
And then, to reveal it, to tell how it came
To be known to him thus, could not be without shame.
He will seek his two friends, who are brave he believes,
And will help him save Alice. What joy he receives
In the thought of her rescue by him ! Ah, 'tis clear
Why he chooses this mode. — And she — *she* — is here !
She treads the same soil — she breathes the same air !
She is here ! — But that tale of her illness ! No, no !
He will not believe it. Why should it be so ?
She was well, if not happy, a short time ago.

And Alice is here !

Doubtless in the same inn ; for the place has but one
That is decent. Ah, could he but see her alone !
He might haply prevent her, and yet betray none.
But that cannot be done.
Nay, he must not be known
To be here, for her sake, for the Earl's, for his own,
For the sake of his plans which might else be o'erthrown.
But how shall he meet with his friends, and unseen ?

As he ponders bewilder'd, and thinks as a mean
To send them a messenger, lo ! on the road,
The two coming down with the brook, singing stoutly
And gaily like it; and the painter devoutly
Lifts up his eyes and his hands unto God.

VII

The autumn sun is going down
Red and glowing,
On the valley and the town
Broad shadows throwing.
Old Windeck ⁵ from his cone-shap'd height
Looks upon a lovely sight,
Bath'd himself in ruddy light,
All his loopholes showing.
In the Birkenauer valley
Even the Weschnitz seems to dally,

As its narrow stream, though flowing
Dark and strong,
Catches here and there, along
Its sombre wavelets, gleams more bright
Than to its flood belong.
Louder too its pleasant song ;
For to roost has gone each bird,
Soft the mountain breeze is blowing,
Scarce the leaves are stirr'd,
Sole the drowsy cricket heard,
Minstrel of the evening time,
To the pine-boughs unseen clinging,
With his noisy winglets ringing
His love-chime.
Darker tree and bush are growing ..
Either side,
Where the Weschnitz' waters flowing,
In the crimson sunlight glowing,
Downward glide :
Darker, fitter for concealing,
Now the time nears for revealing
What they hide.

Over above his former station
Yet in view,
Walter sits in expectation
With the two.
Gazing he adown the road,
There alone,

Momently more anxious growing,
They upon the large long stone,
And the tufted bed of sod,
And the wild stream by it flowing.
If the rock conceals the dell
And ambush there,
They, that watch it, by it fare
Quite as well.

Suddenly, forward Walter bends,
And lifts one hand.
It was not meant for his German friends;
But they understand.
Leaning, too, forward as far as they dare,
They see, on an ass, with a lad to guide,
On the road a maiden exceedingly fair.
A stately man walks at one side,
A fair dame on the other,—
From their loving looks, it is easy to see,
Their tenderness, their anxiety,
Her father and her mother.
By the latter, a little behind her, walks
A handsome dark young man, whose air,
Gloomy and absent, shows gnawing care.
Not once he talks,
Save when he seems to make brief reply,
And, as the party comes up more nigh
The large long stone,
A hasty glance from his troubled eye

Is toward it thrown.
A maid and valet of the elder pair
Attend at seemly distance in the rear.

VIII

And now to the Germans is very clear
What their English friend has been long concealing.
As they turn from that lovely girl to him
And mark the evidence of feeling,
His changing cheek, first red then pale,
His brighten'd eye, now moist and dim,
His heaving chest and trembling limb,
They read enough; the untold tale
Of sorrow and love needs no revealing.

'T is indeed the Angel of his fame.
But ah! how chang'd from that Herald of Morning,
Her who, despite of his art's adorning,
Made his colors seem leaden and pencil tame,
When she sat on the throne by the canvas'd frame
In her prime!
How chang'd from that beauty more fully blown,
That might have symbol'd the perfect day,
That time,
The saddest yet sweetest he ever had known,
When frenzied he fled from her love away
As from crime!

Beauty was there, and wondrous still ;
But oh that meek and imploring look
Of her sorrowful eyes !
Which, never less than thoughtful-sad,
Seem'd now as if they could never look glad ;
And that smile, where mix'd with dejection lies
A touching submission to Heavenly Will !
The soul of Walter the lover is shook ;
Nor need it surprise
That his artist-friends felt their own eyes fill.

And now when still very far from the top
Of the hill, midway
Where hidden by bushes the artists lay,
She caus'd by a sign the guide to stop,
And look'd at the dying day, —
So sadly and wistfully, seem'd she to say
In herself, " How oft will this evening ray
Be joy to me ? "

So the Earl at least redd what that sad gaze express'd,
For, to the arm he already had round her
Joining the other, he closely enwound her,
As if from a hard fate to shield her, while she
Turn'd to his shoulder her head, which was press'd,
Softly, and yet how passionately !
To his breast.
The Countess' moistening lids confess'd
She was not from emotion free.

At this sad moment, when anxiously
The Germans look'd at their friend to see
How the scene he bore,
And Lord Ernest himself might be thought to deplore
His unscrupulous part,—
For he turn'd about with a sudden start,
His features writhing convulsively,
And fac'd the rock,
As if he meant by some sign to arrest
The expected shock,—
At this very moment, four mask'd, arm'd, men,
Or what so seem,
Rush from the thicket above the glen,
And cross the stream.

They make for the party at once. The Earl,
At the Countess' scream,
Unwound his arm from the heart-sick girl
And turn'd, to find himself in the grasp
Of the stoutest of the audacious band,
While a second, with one nervous hand,
Held Lady Alice down in her seat,
Who would have slidden to her feet,
And with the other
Sought to undo from her waist the clasp
Of the distracted mother.
A third, with seemingly violent air,
Weapon in hand, seiz'd young Ernest Clare,

Who wore a truly desperate mien.
The valet struggled as well as he could
With the fourth. The guide had fled to the wood,
As had the maid, and trembling stood,
And from his covert look'd on the scene.

IX

Stoutly the Earl strove, — stoutly and madly ;
His child was in view.
So the third ruffian, abandoning gladly
His effort of show,
Let his feign'd captive go,
To give aid to his fellow. There was need of the two.

'T was just at this instant the wretch who held Alice
Had succeeded in wringing
The arms of the Countess
(Which she smote in pure malice) —
Where, dragg'd on her knees,
To her child she was clinging, —
Had succeeded in tearing
Her arms from her child,
And the poor girl was bearing
Still mounted, and wild
With excess of dismay,
Her arms stretched to her sire, to the thicket away.



A shout — and cries of delight — and a shot
Fired by the villain who had first seiz'd the Earl,
But fired in vain —
And the voice of the girl,
In rapture not pain,
Calling Walter by name,
As she turn'd in her seat,
Her arms spread now to him,
Not her father, — all came
In a single pulse-beat:
And lo! on the spot,
Walter seizes the rein.

Thus foil'd, Clare forgot,
In his fury intense,
All prudence, all sense.
Dizzy and dim,
He drew forth a pistol, and fired at the head
Of his rival. The ball on its death-errand sped,
But struck, 'neath the armpit, the mask'd gipsy instead.

With a horrible yell
Of anguish and fury, shrieking "Traitor!" as well,
The wretch loos'd her hold
Of the bridle and fell.
Her hand touch'd the water, as over she roll'd —
Ere spent she lay still;
Through her false raiment's fold
Her blood, slowly oozing, found its way to the rill.

With the fall of their leader, the three others fled,
Pursu'd by the Germans some steps. In the hold,
So happy! of Walter, Alice lay as if dead.
To the water he bore her,—
But above where they stood,
Because of the blood,—
And some drops sprinkled o'er her.

Not a word was there said.
The Earl press'd his hands,
And the Countess smil'd on him
Through the tears which she shed.

Irresolute stands
In distraction young Clare,
With a rage that increases,
In distraction beholding what tears him to pieces,
Yet what to object to 't were madness to dare.

But when Alice, recovering, tenderly — gratefully,
Oh with what tenderness!
Bent her eyes upon Walter,
With a joy did not render less
Witching her loveliness,
Though he look'd on it hatefully,—
When her lips try to utter
Her feelings, but falter,
Nor even can mutter,—
When he sees Walter's tears



Falling soft on her cheeks,
With emotion that speaks
Aught of love but its fears, —
When, still in his arms, she is finally borne
(So the Earl bade) and blushing
Is plac'd in the saddle, for their instant return,
And Walter is bidden to keep by her side,
While himself for the moment seems lost to their eyes, —
Then his prudence and pride
No longer can master the rage and the scorn
In his bosom which rise.

To the group he was rushing,
At all risks to prevent
Walter's service to Alice,
When some words heard in season
Awoke him to reason,
Made fear supplant malice,
And chang'd his intent.

X

For the custody and healing
Of the wounded, had been given
Proper orders; but the Earl,
With his lov'd angelic girl
Engross'd, could not be driven
By any even the rarest

Impulsion from her side.
The mysterious attack
Was of motives, sure, the fairest
For inquiry; yet, unstirr'd,
He kept throughout his back
To the body, nor once ey'd
The features now uncover'd,
Perhaps not even heard
When an outcry of the crowd,
Full of wonderment and loud,
Announc'd they had discover'd
What the mask was meant to hide.

But the valet, coming forward,
Found admission for a word,
Begging leave to say, the woman,
Who still lay upon the sward,
Did most earnestly beseech
The favor of brief speech
With my lord.

It was this had startled Clare.

“A woman! It is odd!”
And the Earl, with look of care,
Turn'd him round upon the sod,
But turn'd reluctant, slow.
“I know her not,” he said,
As he glanc'd once at the head,

Reluctantly and slow.
But the woman saw not the movement,
And his voice was very low.

Here said Lord Ernest Clare,
With a sad and troubled air,
That appear'd like sympathy,
“Pray, leave it all to me,
My lord, and let me go.
I will see her to the town,—
Since, unhappily for me,
A woman 't would seem to be.
To the wounded wretch I owe
Thus much, who shot her down.”

“It is spoken like a man.
Yet you did but as you should.—
'T was a strange concerted plan,
To attack us in this wood!—
I owe not less to you
Than to Hervey, it is true;
More than thanks to both are due,”
Quoth the Earl.
“What rare forethought 't was to wear
That weapon, my dear Clare!
And that Hervey, with his pair
Of good fellows, should appear
(All arm'd too! which is queer)
In the nick of time, makes clear,

Once more Heaven's special care
Of my girl.
We shall better search this dim
Occurrence when our joy
Is less high. Meantime, my boy,
Let me make you known to him."

The rivals look'd at each other ;
But neither would make advance :
And even the Earl read hatred
In Lord Ernest's deadly glance.
What emotion shone out in the other's
It had puzzled him to tell :
But when the young noble met it,
Behold ! his eyelids fell.

XI

Night had fallen on hill and valley
Ere the rash young lord return'd.
Deeper gloom was on his forehead ;
Yet his fine eyes strangely burn'd.

" You have cause for trouble none,"
Said the Earl to him, when alone
Sat they at the inn together :
" Walter Hervey has departed."

Visibly Lord Ernest started.
“ When the noble fellow, Clare —
Do not writhe thus in your chair ;
'T is beneath you ; for, I swear,
Never stepp'd a nobler one,
Since men walk'd beneath the sun ! —
Scarcely had he seen me hither,
When he, with the German twain,
All on foot, not by the train,
Started off, I know not whither.”
(Clare's black eyes dart fire again.
Consciously, he cast them down.) —
“ Alice, wearied and in pain,
Has already gone to rest.
Thus it is we meet alone. —
What news bring you from the town ?
What is known ? ”

“ Little more than might be guess'd.
Thus much has the hag confess'd.
Money ” —

“ Yet they ask'd it not.”
“ But if Alice, seiz'd, detain'd ” —
“ Seiz'd — detain'd ? And in this land ?
That is hard to understand.
Money scarcely thus were gain'd :
Something more is in the plot.
Whence the woman ? Who is she ?
And why there ? How should this be ? ”

Ernest Clare look'd sore distress'd.
Violent he was, not mean :
Yet already, we have seen,
Has he much more than dissembled ;
And he trembled,
Lest the Earl, one fact made known,
Should require to see the crone.
Did he by a lie conceal it,
Accident might yet reveal it.
Either way he were undone.

As he hung in hesitation,
With his speaking eyes cast down,
Mark'd the Earl the perturbation
O'er his pallid features playing,
And light-smiling kindly said,
One hand on his shoulder laying:
“ What is 't, Ernest, that you dread ?
Are you in your bosom weighing
What it takes to make me frown ? ”

Clare, thus driven to answer, now
Looking up, with burning brow,
Manag'd thus to say ;
Manag'd, — conscience pinch'd him sore,
And his pulse beat wild :
“ 'T is the woman who stole away
Lady Alice once before
When a child.”

Speechless sat the Earl a minute,
Full of horror and amaze;
Then, with reverent brow erected,
“Heaven’s own hand,” he said, “is in it!
In His own time God repays.
Mark too, Clare, the hour selected,
Yours, the husband’s, hand decreed
To wreak vengeance for the deed!”
Ernest Clare turn’d very pale.
But his head was downward bent,
And the Earl,
Wrapt in his high sentiment,
Mark’d it not.
“Money! ’T was a flimsy tale!
Said I not, ’t was some worse plot?
Haply, unappeas’d by time,
The wretch would consummate her crime
Against my unoffending girl.
But” — and he snatch’d his hat, and press’d
Towards the door with startling haste—
“I’ll see this fiend this very night.
I know how I shall bring to light
What yet she has to hide.
Come with me, Clare, and be my guide.”

Clare well might tremble; and he did.
Like ashes pale, he forward slid,
And interpos’d his hand.
“No, not to-night, my lord, I pray!

We run no risk to wait till day.
In mercy to the wounded wretch,
Who suffers sorely, I beseech
You kindly stay.
The surgeon did as much command.
I left her feverous and weak.
To-morrow she may safely speak
And better understand.
Besides, poor Alice suffering more" —
The Earl retreated from the door,
Surpriz'd, but in this eager part
Seeing traces of a kinder heart
Than he thought Clare own'd before.

Behold the certain course of sin !
The way is never out as in.
The lie, once told, its fraud must back
By twenty others twice as black.
And sure as drops of water run
Together till the stream be one,
As sure as waves press waves upon,
So brings one vice another on.

Unhappy Clare ! who shrinks to name
Even to himself his guilt and shame.
Since yesterday, what has he done,
Who never knew himself so vile ?
And yet the guilt is but begun :
Not falsehood, not deceit, alone ;

He knows the hag may die meanwhile,
And hopes the Earl, when morn shall come,
Will find her lips forever dumb.

XII

Morn came; but with it came instead
A word from her he wish'd were dead:
She pray'd to see the Earl alone.

Then Ernest knew himself undone.—
Up to his chamber steadily
He strode, and entering turn'd the key.
Then chang'd his mien, and down like rain
A shower of scalding tears descended,
The scalding tears of rage and pain
And shame, not sorrow. This weakness ended,
He drew from underneath his vest,—
The ribbon that attach'd it lifted
Slow and carefully over his head,—
A lovely miniature, confess
The loveliest, as the last and best,
That ever glorified the hand
Of its creator, hand most gifted
Of ivory-painters, quick or dead.
'T was taken, when Clare's party pass'd
Through Paris for this fatal land.

He gaz'd on it a long, sad while,
Then press'd with passion to his lips,
With passion both and tenderness,—
Though that was more and this was less,—
The breathing tablet; then a smile,
Or rather spasm, appear'd to pass
Over his face. With steady fingers
He cautiously removes the glass,
Again, a moment, gazing lingers,
The ivory then in water dips,
And then a dampen'd sponge rubs o'er it.
'T is done! and nothing now remains
Of all that cost the limner pains,
Though death alone shall e'er efface
From Clare's heart's table any trace
Of the earth's-angel who sat for it.

Pale as the now blank ivory leaf,
Without a single sign of grief
Or that his rash act he deplores,
Without a mark of any feeling,
Save that the spasm, or mocking smile,
Flits o'er his face again the while,
And makes him less like one that's dead,
The glass he carefully restores,
Returns the ribbon o'er his head,
The case beneath his vest concealing,
Then rings the bell, and opes his doors.

Bidding his servant, who attends,
To follow in the early train,
Clare now descends
The naked stair.
Once, as he pass'd a door, again
Dropp'd silent down his heart's warm rain ;
This time in sorrow ; for he heard,
Sweet as the lovesong of a bird,
A voice in there.
'T was *hers*. He seem'd to choke with grief.
But passion came to his relief.
He dash'd his hand across his brow,
Then clench'd his fist and mutter'd "Now ! "
And vow'd, within his breast, a vow,
Bold, wicked, deep yet brief.

Down to the stalls himself he strode,
Saw his horse saddled, seiz'd the rein,
Inquir'd to Heidelberg the road,
And if the same had Walter ta'en,
Sprung to his seat, and, spurring, rode
With might and main.

XIII

Meanwhile, the Earl attain'd the town,
The house, the room with floor of stone,

Where lay, stretch'd on a narrow cot,
The double victim of the plot,
Lord Ernest's and her own.

The leech was there, and staid beside ;
The watch, who had serv'd the Earl as guide,
Remain'd. Save these, they were alone.

But that young Clare had made her known,
The Earl had fail'd to recognize
In the gaunt form that pale there lies,
Still habited in its disguise —
Alone the coat remov'd she had worn,
Which gave to view, all fleck'd with gore,
Some of it freshly shed that morn,
The coarse man's-shirt which yet she wore, —
The Earl had fail'd to recognize,
But for the cause had made her known,
His ancient maid. She open'd wide
Her once keen but now languid eyes,
And the Earl bent on them his own.
“Esther!” he cry'd, with some surprise,
Yet pity mingled with the tone.
“My lord!” respectfully replies
The woman, and attempts to rise.
But the leech laid on her his palm,
And bowing to the Earl explain'd,
With courtesy somewhat overstrain'd,
Her danger and the need of calm.

The silence following this check
The sufferer was the first to break:
Her voice was clear, and bold, though weak.
“My lord, you knew me not, I see.
I do not wonder that should be;
For sorrow and time change poor and rich.
But, ere that fool can interfere,”
(The unconscious surgeon look'd sedate,)
“ Let me, before my strength abate,
Recount the single cause for which
I have pray'd you lay aside your state
To see me here.

“ I need not say
By whom your child was stolen away.
But how your lordship fail'd to trace,
Early or late, or far or near,
Either our course or lurking-place,
Remains to tell.
Perhaps, my lord, that I am here
Helps to explain that mystery well.
A smuggler bore us from the coast,
And, shelter'd on a foreign shore,
Conceal'd us till pursuit was o'er.
'T was the same man who yesterday
Your lordship seiz'd, and to your cost
Had nearly prov'd, though priests may pray
And saints forgive,

In hardy spirits is never lost
The sense of wrong while wrongers live."

"Wretch!" —

"Nay, my lord, that's not the word!
Why would you part that man and me?"

"Is't not enough, what now I've heard?
I did no more than what I ought.
A girl like you, so bred, so taught,
Was not a mate for such as he."

"And yet, proud Earl, he was my choice.
What matters it, that speech and voice
Have caught refinement, if that be?
My heart is nature's; and we see
Daily, even in your own degree,
Much more unequal mates than we."

She press'd her side, as if in pain,
And ceas'd to speak.
And the Earl said,
With wonderment and pity seiz'd
Though still he felt himself aggrev'd,
The while his own hands rais'd and spread
More smooth the pillow 'neath her head,
And saw her look reliev'd:
"But for so light a cause to wreak

Such foul revenge, and still remain
All unappeas'd!"

"They say, my lord, I have a streak
Of Eastern, call it Gipsy blood.
I know not if to that my mood
Be owing, but this I feel, I should
Do even the like again."

"Woman! is this thy dying thought?
At such a time"—

"I know I ought
To show remorse and seem devout,
But what is in me, that will out.
You will, my lord, excuse my pride
In boasting, on the verge of death,
Whate'er my faults, I never lied.
Pray do not stop me now to chide:
It wastes the time and scants my breath."

"Then let us that first crime pass by.
I do forgive you all the wo
It has cost me from that hour till now.
Pride, Esther, was your darling sin,
And vengefulness your monster vice;
And for its fierce desires to win
A moment's transport, braving twice
God, and man's verdict, here you lie."

“ And, since it must be, willingly !
’T was fate : I do not murmur, I ;
And if I must that lust forego,
So be it ! I would rather die.”

“ Unhappy ! wilt thou God defy ? ”

“ I have no treasure in the sky.”
’T was coldly said, not scoffingly. —
“ My lord, you bade me pass that by.
You now know all. And so do I.
You will not guess who told it me.
That is the tale I have to tell.
Pray listen, and then punish well.
That done, my soul parts free.

“ At Erbach, when you stopp’d to view
The Castle yesternoon, my eyes
Fell on your party, and I straightway knew
The Lady Alice ; for, to my surprise,
I had heard she was recover’d, — when, and how,
Through whom, not knowing : but I know it *now*.
I knew her by the likeness — which to see
Was wonderful ! it could not be but she,
So like my lady-mistress. Then arose,
In my wild heart, a thought of my own state,
A wanderer, wretched, wanting food and clothes,
Homeless and hopeless, and renew’d my hate.” —

"'T was by your fault, if not the lot you chose."

"My lord, no matter,—'t was perhaps my fate,
As yours, to suffer; if I made my foes,
And they were not, the end was still the same,—
The fire was real, though fancy lit the flame."

She paus'd a moment, drew away her wrist
When the leech seiz'd it, told him to desist
In broken German,—that she should talk on,
Though her life paid for it when she was done,
And thus resum'd:

"There was with you a youth,
Who I could see was Lady Alice' lover,
But not her lov'd one; and I heard, in sooth,
The servants say so, in their flippant mirth,
Not knowing that the wretch, who seem'd to hover
Vacantly near them, was of English birth.

"My plans half-laid,
(For Satan came to aid,)
I waited for the young lord by the road.

"The Devil had put him in a proper mood.
He listen'd to me, though at first with scorn,
But, hopeless else, his heart with passion torn,
Finally met me, near the very spot
Where yesterday the traitor fired the shot
That was to crush the witness of his plot."

“*His* plot?”

“My plot — his longing to fulfil
And break the Lady Alice to his will.
I own’d to him my hate — but not, beside,
My hate of *him* for his insulting pride.
I meant to ruin both — so should have done,
But that the Devil has aye more tricks than one.”

The indignant Earl saw by the surgeon’s face
He knew not English, and he answer’d thus :
“ You do malign him, woman! You avow
Revenge and malice, hate of all of us ;
And ’tis that wicked spirit of your race
Prompts this invention now.
Yet ’tis to him, his kindness that you owe
This surgeon’s care ” —

“ Who cannot speak one word
Of English, nor its purport know when heard.
Yes! and he did still more. The good young lord
Tried to convince me, that in rage of heart
He had fired to hit his rival ! Why then come
Last night to offer, in this very room,
To pay me largely to conceal his part ?
No, my once master, Earl of Duttonville,
I was the object whom he meant to kill.
He hop’d to hide his secret in my tomb.
But now ’tis out ! Your vengeance will not stay :
You will requite him ? ”

Stood aghast the Earl.

Speechless with perfect horror for a time,
He could at last but say,
“ Woman ! what drove you to commit this crime
Against a luckless, unoffending girl ? ”

“ Hell.”

“ And ” —

“ Its fires you think must be my pay.”

She laugh'd a fiendish laugh, with gurgling sound.
“ Look here ! ” she said,
And seem'd to say with glee.
At once she rent the compress from her wound,
The blood outgushing like a little sea,
Toss'd it with effort backwards o'er her head,
Sprang up half-way convulsively,
Turn'd over on her face, and straight was dead.

XIV

Matchless Heidelberg ! who turns him
From the Rhine nor visits thee,
Art alike with Nature spurns him ;
Painter, no, nor bard is he.
By my honor, 't is a wonder,
Thy fam'd towers riven by thunder,
Blasted by the enemy,

No decrepitude disclosing,
But a grandeur still imposing
By that air of pride reposing
And of mournful majesty,
And the Neckar 'neath thee flowing,
Bank'd by hills where vines are growing,
With the scatter'd houses showing
Through them so enchantingly,
'T is, I say, alone a wonder
Worth an ocean-tour to see.

Twice three centuries of glory,
And of princes fam'd in story,
From the Palsgrave Louis down
To the Elector of that name,
Who, his country seeing in flame
And his wretched subjects flying,
These from slaughter, those from shame,
And the narrow underlying
Highway of his little town
Pillage-chok'd and carnage-reeking,
Sent a challenge, though in vain,
Desperately but nobly seeking
For their lives to stake his own,
To the ravager Turenne; ⁶
Twice three centuries of honor,
Which the hands of princes, vying
Who should leave the most undying
Traces of his pomp upon her,

Have made legible in stone;
Siege and fire, and storm and sack,
In one century o'er and o'er,
From De Tilly to Melac,
Till the devilish rage of war
Outdid all excesses past,
And the nations stood aghast,
When the Neckar, foul with blood,
Town and tower enkindled saw
(So bade Louis and Louvois)
Flashing on its silver flood,
And an innocent people bore
Outrages before unknown,
(Hell alone could well disgorged
Fiends to invent or practise more,)
Woes to move a heart of stone,
Yet was no forbearance shown,
Even God's altars overthrown
By the bloodhounds of De Lorge; ⁷
These are traits would surely shed
Interest on a meaner place;
But there needs no ancient story;
All sufficient for thy glory
Are the charms which deck thy face;
And the memories of the dead
Yield before thy living grace.

Pass we by the mine-sprung tower,
'Neath the rais'd portcullis in.

Here let wonderment begin.
Rarely will you have to tell
More delight, surprise as well,
Pomp within, and, outside, power,
Palace in a citadel:
On the right, the part most chaste,
Otto-Heinrich's happier taste, —
Happier in an age whose light
Made it easy to go right;
For, three centuries ago,
Flourish'd Michelangelo:
Facing you, the Friedrichsbau,
Where in their red sandstone stand
They with whom the race began
Of the princes of the land,
From victorious Charlemagne
Down to him, the Palatine,⁶
Founder of the ancient line
Whence may boast direct to spring
Ludwig, Bayern's poet-king.⁹

By a vaulted alley now
Pass we through the Friedrichsbau.
Lo, the Platform! from whose floor
Spreads, the wanderer's eyes before,
Oh, so fair, so sweet a view!
Hill and valley, winding river,
Stately bridge and hamlets white:
Seldom have you seen, if ever,

Daintier landscape, scene more bright.
Yet there is a fairer sight,
Nobler, and more varied too.
Take the Terrace, on your right.
Now, not only hill and river,
Bridge and town and hamlet white,
Come in view,
But the old red Castle rises,
With a greatness that surprises,
Seen throughout its whole extent,
Solemn, sad, magnificent,
Wrought moreover to a tone
Soft, subdu'd, that 's all its own,
On your sight.
Wall and tower, the shrubs that bound it,
Harmonize with all around it.
'T seems almost as Nature drew,
Plann'd it, plac'd it, ruin'd too,
Chose and mellow'd down its hue,
And about it objects threw,
Purposely man's art to show
How to give delight.

But gaze on undoubtingly,
Uninstructed though you be!
Needs to teach you no art-strictures
Here what beauties to descry;
Nature, in her happiest pictures,
Has a charm for every eye.

Yet there are moods when both combin'd,
Art and nature, fail to please,
When the absorb'd observer's mind,
Thought-absorb'd or ill at ease,
Takes no note of what he sees,
Or, beholding scenes like these,
No true joy can find.

So it is with him who now
Over the platform leans and gazes,
Gazes with a mournful brow
Seemingly on bank and river.
But nor hill, nor hamlet white,
Nor the old red Castle's pile,
Nor the winding river ever,
Even for one moment, raises
In his breast sincere delight,
Or has summon'd to his lip,
From his coming there till now,
One pleas'd smile.
Yet he has seen them all the while,
Seen as in a dreamy show,
Where he has sat and sitteth yet,
His body resting on one hip,
On the long low bench of stone
Underneath the parapet,
Over its top his right arm thrown
On the projected elbow leaning,
The bent hand, resting on his brow,

Half his averted features screening,
Seen them all and sees them now.

'T is sad Walter all alone,
Sitting upon the bench of stone ;
For his German friends have gone,
Seeing him in that gloomy vein,
To the Terrace on the right,
Where they have the fairer sight ;
Though 't is one familiar too :
Yet its beauties, ever new,
Have for them whose minds retain
Happily a healthful tone,
Still a fresh delight.

XV

The shadows of the Eastern tow'r
Are on the stone where Walter sits,
Thinking on the Earl's fair daughter.
The shadows of the Castle hill,
And of the Castle, fall as well
Half-way over the lovely water.
The day has lost almost an hour,
Reckoning as the shadow flits
Eastering, since there Walter sits
Thinking on the Earl's sick daughter.
And his thoughts begin to turn,

From the cares and fears that wound him
And the hopes that burn,
Toward the objects that surround him ;
And a curious thought comes o'er him
Gazing down the rocky hill
Over the low flat wall before him,
What a place this might have been,
In the olden lawless time,
For the easy and unseen
Perpetration of a crime :
How some prince whose wife displeas'd him,
Or her rival pleas'd too well,
Might have in their evening walk,
As the devilish impulse seiz'd him,
Or so plann'd, amid their talk,
Push'd her o'er the crag's steep side,
And, with horror feign'd, have cry'd
That she fell.

Just then, Walter is aware
Of a step, and on his shoulder
Feels a hand. A voice, elsewhere
Often heard, but this time bolder,
Deeper, yet not louder, said :
“ I have vow'd to exact revenge, where'er
I found you.” (Lifting here his head,
Walter met the burning eyes,
Burning as if they meant to kill,

Of his dark rival.) "Here, as well
As elsewhere. Rise!"

Walter had turn'd, and did not need
To bring him up this fierce command :
Yet might he have reason'd with his foe
Against a quarrel on such a spot,
Expos'd to interruption too,
And shown his German friends in view ;
But, as the insulting word was said,
Clare heavily on his shoulder laid
The hollow of his hand :
In other terms, there had been given
By his sworn enemy a blow ;
And boil'd his yet young blood too hot
To brook delay.
Springing to his feet, he said,
"Lead!" a few steps forward made,
And motion'd to the vaulted way.

"No!" cry'd the violent youth : "Not so!
Hence from this spot you shall not go!
Take your last look of Heaven."
Therewith, he clutch'd the artist's coat,
Where met the collar, near the throat.

Without another word, they close.
The match was equal 'twixt the foes.
Though Walter, of maturer years

And better built, more strong appears,
Yet Clare, a madman in his rage,
And agile, makes up want of age
By desperate and determin'd will.
His only object is to kill.

He means to bring his foeman more
In nearness to the Platform's verge,

Then trip him if he can, and urge
With all his strength and push him o'er,
Though he was sure to share the same
Destruction with him. Walter's aim
Was to keep from it, and to wear
His rival out, until he could
Force on him, spite his frenzy'd mood,
His own terms for a fight elsewhere.

But when, with all his efforts, yet
Clare drew him to the parapet,
When, with one foot against the bench,
'T was all that he could do to keep
His head from bending o'er the steep,
He drew away with sudden wrench
His right arm from around his foe,
And rais'd it high to strike, though loath,
Full on his head a heavy blow,
To save them from destruction both.

Clare seiz'd the time, with wondrous strain
Lifted him, pushing back his feet,
Then, with one mighty effort more,
Heaving, essay'd to hurl him o'er.

But forc'd to take his gripe again,
Walter, of movement quite as fleet,
Regain'd his foothold. And now Clare,
His own back to the barrier wall,
Resolves the last resource to dare,
And, yielding to the fatal fall,
Draw down his foe and finish all.

His head bent o'er the parapet
Backward so far, alone his hold
Of Walter kept him standing yet,
With lips that on each other fold
As if no cry should from them get,
While like a tiger's glare his eyes,—
So fiery-red, so savage-bold,—
Clare to draw Walter forward tries.
But Walter's foot again is set
Against the bench, his head thrown back,
His hands on Clare's stretch'd arms are bent,
His brows are knit, his veins distent,
And every nerve is on the rack
His purpose to prevent.

Seeing this, and knowing his efforts vain,
Clare tries to take him by surprise.
Bending suddenly forward again,
With arms now slack,
He catches Walter in his embrace.
Press'd thus together, face to face,

He lifts him with his former strain,
Meaning with all his might and main
To hurl him and himself together
Over the steep-down place.

And, sooth to say, I know not whether
That frightful effort had been vain ;
But, in the moment of the attack,
Swift as the flash that leads the thunder,
Both were dash'd violently back,
Then instantly torn asunder.

Thrown staggering towards the jutting stone
That shuts the angle of the scene,
Walter saw Clare himself o'erthrown,
And his two German friends between.
“What! would you new-baptize the fort?”
Cries one in French. And then his peer :
“These English folk how very queer!
Is this a place for such rude sport?”

Clare answer'd not, not even by look.
Pale with defeated hate and rage,
He show'd no wish to re-engage,
But haughtily and sullen took
His slow course towards the vaulted way.
Yet, when about to disappear,
He turn'd him round with brief delay,
And shook his clench'd fist towards his foe,
And said, with manner mark'd and slow,

"We meet upon another scene,
With no Dutch fools to come between."

Both Walter's friends sprung on him straight;
And Walter shouted, though too late,
As he rush'd after too,
"Stop, Lutzenburg! this quarrel 's mine!"

Again Clare's visage came in view.
"Yours! both!" he cried. "Off, Rhenish swine!"
This as he spoke, and turn'd to go,
He struck, like one driven mad by wine,
Fiercely the foremost of the two,
Who instantly return'd the blow;
And, spite of all that Walter could do,
Or for his prior claim alledge,
The parties, followed by a score
Of students who the artists knew,
Cross'd rapidly the Neckar-bridge,
And, in a few brief moments more,
The lord lay bleeding on the floor
Of a lone inn, well-known resort
For college-meetings of that sort,
By Walter's friend run through and through.

XVI

A week has flown.
Yet Heidelberg holds Walter still.
'Tis not the Neckar's vale alone,
Nor the old Castle of red stone
Upon the hill,
Detains him in the narrow town,
But Alice — Alice lies there ill.

Daily he takes him to the hotel
Where sickness keeps the ill-fated girl,
Each day to learn she is more unwell.
Twice has he seen the afflicted Earl,
And once the Countess, who came in,
Looking so careworn, pale, and thin !
To put her fingers in his own
And faintly smile. When this was done,
She said she must at once begone ;
Her child could not be left alone.
And as she spoke, dejected-low,
Walter observ'd her tears fall down ;
Whereat his own began to flow.
The Earl said not a word of Clare.
His wound was serious Hervey knew.
He knew his vehement temper too
Made more than usual need of care.
But soon, when able to endure

Motion and travel, Clare would go
By easy stages, brief and slow,
To Paris and there wait his cure.
All this the town with Walter knew.
Just and highbred, the good Earl, true
To his tastes and instincts, sought to spare
The innocent cause of all this wo,
Which the young noble had to rue
And to atone for, sought to spare
The object of his just esteem
At least this one unpleasant theme.

A week has flown.

'T is midnight; and the old gray town
Sleeps in the shadow of the moon,
Whose orb, now full,
Floats westering o'er the Koenigstuhl,
Tipping the Castle towers with light,
Whose many angles steep'd in shade,
Some by the walls that flank them made,
Some by their slanting sides which shun
The enchanting light that elsewhere falls,
Render the pile, which still is one
In its assembled towers and walls,
A grander yet a lovelier sight,
To those who paint and those who write,
Than when illumin'd by the sun.
The hill upon the river's right
Stands out with all its houses white.

The river too, upon that side,
Sparkles and flashes in the light,
Its little waves, that come and go
Like fitful flames that sink and glow,
Looking more glitteringly bright
That shadows half the water hide.
And save that river
Sparkling ever,
Save its ceaseless audible flow,
Is nothing in the deep night heard.
No breeze the mountain wood has stirr'd,
Scarce the aspens shiver :
And the river's noisy flow
Sounds more noisy for the stillness
To the mournful watcher, who,
At his open easement sitting,
Sitting there despite the chillness,
Of the glorious heaven unweeting
And earth's solemn splendor fleeting,
Recks not of the hour that 's fleeting,
Sees no light yet feels it too.

'T is sad Walter sitting there,
In the autumnal chill night air,
Conscious nor of night nor chillness,
Pondering his poor lady's illness,
Sitting there.

From an inner chamber streams,

Through the door he has left ajar,
One dim light. Its slanting beams
Faintly define the things that are,
And their places where :
They show not Walter's visage wan,
Pale as the sill he leans upon,
In the window-shadows dun,
Body and feature all as one,
Sitting there.

Suddenly, he thinks he hears —
His blood runs cold —
A voice — 't is Alice' own he deems,
Calling him by his Christian name.
Shivering over all his frame
(His very scalp appear'd to creep)
Like one awaken'd from his sleep
By horrid dreams,
Starting, his arm forsook its hold : •
He turn'd his head ; 't was to behold,
No mere illusion mock'd his ears.
Full of its one sad thought, his mind
The voice to Alice had assign'd ;
But real were the call, the tone.
Her sire himself stood by his chair.
He had rush'd into the room alone.
A lamp, the drowsy servant bare
Who enter'd now, upon him shone,
Lighting his features, which express

Sad suffering undergone, while glare
His blue eyes almost colorless
With terror and despair.
His hand on Walter's arm he laid,
And with imploring passion said,
Using again the same address,
As never the Earl had done before,
While stood the artist terror-dumb :
“Come, quickly, *Walter!* Come! oh come!
You have sav'd her twice. This time once more,
And she is yours. Come, come! ”

Aghast with dread,
Without a word,
Scarce understanding what he heard,
The artist sought at once the door, —
So wilder'd with his nameless dread,
That even the lord of Duttonville,
More self-possess'd, though suffering still,
Had to remind him at the sill
Of his uncover'd head.

XVII

Through all the shadowy silent street,
Which echo'd with their hurried feet,
No word was spoken. Nor had the Earl
Haply, if ask'd, told all the tale

He had to tell:

How, certain that some secret grief
Was preying on the suffering girl,
Her skill'd physicians had insisted,
(The Earl admitting that such existed,) Unless the mind should find relief
All means to cure the body's ill
Must fail.

Convinc'd, her sire would still delay
The last resource from day to day:
But now a sudden change come on
Had waken'd terror, and pride was gone.
No word was spoken, until they come
To an antechamber of the room
Where Alice lay. Lord Duttonville
Then whisper'd, pressing the artist's hand
Nervously, "A moment wait,"
And pass'd on tiptoe over the sill,
Between the doors which separate
The chambers and half-folded stand,
Showing the sleeping-room quite dim
Save where the one light in the room
Where Walter was, and which itself
Stood shaded on a bracket-shelf,
Sent through the interspace a gleam
That made more visible the gloom.

Walter sustain'd his tremulous hand
On a high chair,— he would not sit,

He could not unsupported stand,—
And waited for the moment fit
To summon him. Was heard no sound,
Save the low ticking of a clock,
Which presently the half-hour struck,
And his own heaving heart's rebound,
Which sounded, in the stillness there,
Though dull even louder than the beat
That mark'd, like it, life's seconds fleet,
And, through his pulses, shook the chair.

Awe came upon him, pious dread,
Remember'd sorrowing, thoughts sublime,
That step by step his feelings led
Up from this clod to Him instead,
Our only Help in time of need.
Bending his knees upon the floor,
He bow'd upon both hands his head,
And in low tones of anguish said,
“Have pity, God our Father! Spare,
Thou Who hast spar'd her twice before,
In pity spare her yet this time!”

He still upon the boards was kneeling,
Hot tears were through his fingers stealing,
When came the Earl to where he knelt,
His own cheeks showing what he felt,
(But his were happy tears,)
And while his right forefinger rais'd

Made sign of silence, softly said,
His left hand laid on Walter's head:
"Tis well. But Heaven now be prais'd!
Alice is in a tranquil sleep.
Though far from vanish'd are our fears,
Yet, from this salutary rest,
We may and let us hope the best.
Remain, and help me here to keep
A hopeful watch, till Alice wake.
If not then meet at once to break
To her the news I have to tell,
At least you may with me partake
The bliss of knowing her less unwell,
And, morning come, your lips make known,
My hopes in Clare being now o'erthrown,
Yourself and she shall henceforth dwell
Together one.
I leave you now awhile alone."

The Earl is gone—
We may believe for thankful pray'r,
And to invoke the Almighty One,
As Walter had himself just done,
For mercy on his child and heir,
Or otherwise for strength to bear
Her loss, if that must needs ensue,
With humble resignation due—
The Earl is gone.
Walter sits leaning on a stand,

His cold brow pillow'd on his hand.
Seems the stillness to him deeper
In the chamber of the sleeper :
In the one where he is sitting,
Ticks the clock, that marks the flitting
Seconds, louder to his ear.
Yet his hot heart, quicker beating,
Marks the selfsame seconds fleeting,
Beating with a heavy aching,
Hot and fast, alike partaking
Of the throbs of hope and fear.

The night wears on
Into the morning. A new half-hour gone.
The clock with its subdued and silver tone
Once more strikes One.
And back the kindly Earl of Duttonville
To Walter's side is come,
And looking to the Lady Alice' room,
With a soft sadness, through whose twilight gloom
Hope like a ray of pleasant sunset shone,
Said, "All is still."
Then, sitting down by Walter, he related
In whisper'd phrases, short and few, —
Alone what self-regard, and courtesy due
To Walter's feelings, from the tale abated, —
The painful motives which had chang'd his view.
This done, he asks the painter would he lie
On one of the day-couches there, and try

To court forgetfulness till Alice woke.
Walter declines it, and the Earl, whose woes
For two whole nights have kept him from repose,
Lies down himself, and, wearied, seems to doze.

The night wears on ;
And louder yet the clock appears to tick ;
And Walter's heart beats with it heavier still,
Yet painful-quick.
Another half-hour gone.
Once more the silver bell strikes One.
Then in the darken'd chamber of the sick
Arose a sudden cry of fearful tone,
That for the moment made his heart stand still
And his flesh quiver with an ague chill.
'T was Alice' voice, wild, terrified, and high,
As if awoke in fright and agony,
And "Walter!" cry'd. It was the only sound.

Walter sprang up, and, almost at a bound,
Has pass'd the sill.
The Earl has hasten'd after with the light.

Up in her bed, all in her nightclothes white,
Sat Lady Alice, haggard, thin, and wan,
Wan as the very nightrobe she had on,
But beauteous yet.
Large drops of icy sweat
Like beads upon her ashy forehead sate,

Too heavy-thick to run.

Her mother's arm enfolds her. By her side
The nurse stood needless.

At the unlook'd-for sight
Of Walter, her large eyes, which, open'd wide,
Had glar'd at first, wild, vacant, terrified,
Beam with intelligence and pure delight.
"Here? And so soon?" she cried.

The Earl, who could not speak, replied
To her sweet, melancholy smile,
Which might an angel's care beguile
From other human wo to hers alone
And made the very nurse shed tears the while,
Her sire replied
By taking her thin fingers in his own,
And pressing them with Walter's in one fold,
But shudder'd, as did Walter, horrified
To feel those tremulous fingers icy-cold.
Then with that wistful yearning look her eyes
At all times, even in happy moments, wore,
And which now made those by her weep the more,
She smil'd on both her parents, then, with love
(And oh how mournful-eager that love-look!)
Turning to Walter, who, his arm above
Her mother's, help'd support her now,
And wip'd the death-drops from her brow,
And bending o'er her seem'd with grief to choke,
Turning to him her longing eyes she spoke:

"Do not weep, Walter, that it is too late :
Joy was not meant for me : God's will be done!"
(Her voice more frequent interruptions break.)
"Comfort my parents ; — be to them a son.
Papa — mamma, — love Walter — for my sake :
Love him, as he deserves — as I have done."
Her eyes grow vacant, and her breath, more weak,
Breathes with a vault-like chillness on his cheek.
"I am very cold : place — place me — *by your grate,*
On the low stool" —

She gasp'd ; her pallid head
Droop'd on his shoulder ; and her wasted fingers,
Which throb not to the touch that on them lingers,
Lie looser in his pressure than before.
He rais'd her — kiss'd her — look'd — and knew her dead,
And fell with her, beside her, on the bed,
Sight, feeling, hearing, for the time, no more.

XVIII

A month has gone.
In his stately rooms, in the mighty town
Where grew and ripen'd his large renown,
Stands Walter Hervey all alone.
Poor wretch ! his mother had not known,
So listless was he, broken-down,
Gaunt-visag'd, hollow-ey'd and wan,
Her son.

He has just return'd from Duttonville,
Where for three weeks he kept his bed,
Hovering at times 'twixt life and death.
Mindful of what his child had said
With dying breath,
The Earl had kept him there while ill,
And, desolate sire! would keep him still.
He has just returned from Duttonville,
Where, in the Castle chapel laid,
The victim of no common doom,
Sleeps she who was its heiress born,
And the last turn that very morn
His steps had made,
When for his homeward drive array'd,
Was to her tomb.

In the stately rooms where it fitteth well
A painter of high renown to dwell,
In the stateliest of the noblest suite
His taste and wealth have made complete,
Where hang, in their gilded frames all set,
Those pictures which he will not sell,
Or which he has not dispos'd of yet,
Moves Walter. As his slow steps bend,
From the lofty door at the further end,
To where the three great windows bright
O'er their lower shutters let in the light,
A smile it was not pleasant to see
Pass'd over his lips: not of mockery:

Nor was it bitter, but rather sad.
It might be render'd, if so you please,
"Vanity of vanities!"
How futile is this costly sight,
That at one time had made me glad !
What are now wealth and taste to me ? "

The covers had been taken away
That during his absence on all things lay, —
Even from the statuary ;
This only left, the cloth that falls
Over the pictures that line the walls, —
By his order thus left to be.
He lifts the end of the hanging white
Next the window on the right,
Lifts it slowly, with trembling fingers,
Seeming to dread the very sight
Which yet he is longing to behold,
For his touch a moment lingers
As he lifts it, trembling, slow, —
Lifts it with trembling fingers slow
From the picture that hangs most low,
And turns it over the edge of the frame ;
So that the canvas receives the light
From the left, very nearly the same
As when the picture was painted and drawn,
Which is the Angel of the Dawn,
That which open'd his way to fame.

There, in the depth of those mournful eyes,
So thoughtful-sad, so wistful-tender,
The deathless spirit of Alice lies;
And that matchless mouth defies
Line or color again to render
Any copied charm that vies
With the enchantment of its smile,
With the enchantment of that smile,
Winning-sweet yet sad the while,
Which makes the wanderer of the sky
Seem to pity the toil and sorrow
On the earth for man each morrow
Dawning with the light on high.

No! there needs no golden tresses,—
Golden in their lights, but brown
In their shadows, brown yet bright;
Nor the smooth low forehead white,—
Classic-low and seemly wide,—
Which such virgin grace expresses,
Youthful grace with worth ally'd;
Nor the fine-laid brows, whose down
Melts so softly in the skin
That not easily is it known
Where they end or where begin,
And whose shape and sloping line
Have a beauty all divine;
No, nor faultless nose; nor cheek
Dimpling with that sad sweet smile;
Nor the softly rounded chin:

Of these traits there needs not one
The true model to bespeak ;
In the eyes and mouth alone,
There the magic will he seek
Makes the Lady Alice known.
And so well he marks it there
Through the dimness of his tears,
That the dweller of the sky
Alice risen from death appears,
Blooming as in earlier years,
But with all her wealth of hair,
While the color'd wings she wears
Mark the spirit upward flown
To those happier regions where
Time and space are all unknown.
Yes, so well he marks it there,
That the winged child of the sky
Through the mist-veil of his tears
His translated love appears
Smiling on him from on high,
Tenderly yet sadly smiling,
Sadly for the wo he bears
And the wo he still must bear,
Tenderly that wo beguiling
With an angel's sympathy
For remember'd mortal care ;
And her thrilling tones he hears
As herself he seems to see,
And her voice that thrills him hears

Full of that sad sympathy
Which her smile appears to wear,
Bidding him assuage his tears,
And his yearning soul prepare,
By a well-spent life below,
For their better union there
Where is neither change nor wo.

Still from his feverish sick-bed faint,—
By his depressing passion, slow
But sure heart-wasting, sore nerve-shaken,—
His tears, which pain, not give relief,
Made, by the habit of his grief,
At any thought of her to flow,—
By an o'erwhelming sense of wo
In this moment overtaken,
When first he appears the extent to know
Of the bliss that has been taken
Away, and which nothing can restore him,—
By the so sudden sense o'ertaken
Of his bereavement, lone, forsaken,
Tearful, faint, and sorrow-shaken,
The painter, by his picture kneeling,
Like as before a patron-saint
Some wo-worn penitent devout,
His hands at arm's length spread before him,
The fingers lock'd and palms turn'd out,
And thus in supplication spake,
In tones of sad and passionate feeling:

"Take me, Alice, with you ! take ! —
O my God, if that it be
Not against Thy form'd decree,
Do not yet my fate defer !
Let me die, and be with her ! ”
His hands then fold, with gesture wild
Are drawn up to his breast, then spread,
And, hiding in their palms his head,
The unnerv'd man wept like a child.

For many minutes thus he knelt,
No further outward sign revealing,
What he felt ;
Then, slowly risen, once more he gaz'd
Upon his master-work, then rais'd
The cloth where folded next the wall,
And drawing it over let it fall, —
Lingering, — slowly let it fall,
The mimic life again concealing,
But shudder'd, fancy-stricken, feeling
As though he had the hanging spread
Not o'er a picture, but, instead,
Over dead Alice drop'd a pall.

With look deject and full of thought,
With solemn step and downcast eye,
The painter now his study sought,
His larger art-room next the sky,
Where in the roof a window wrought

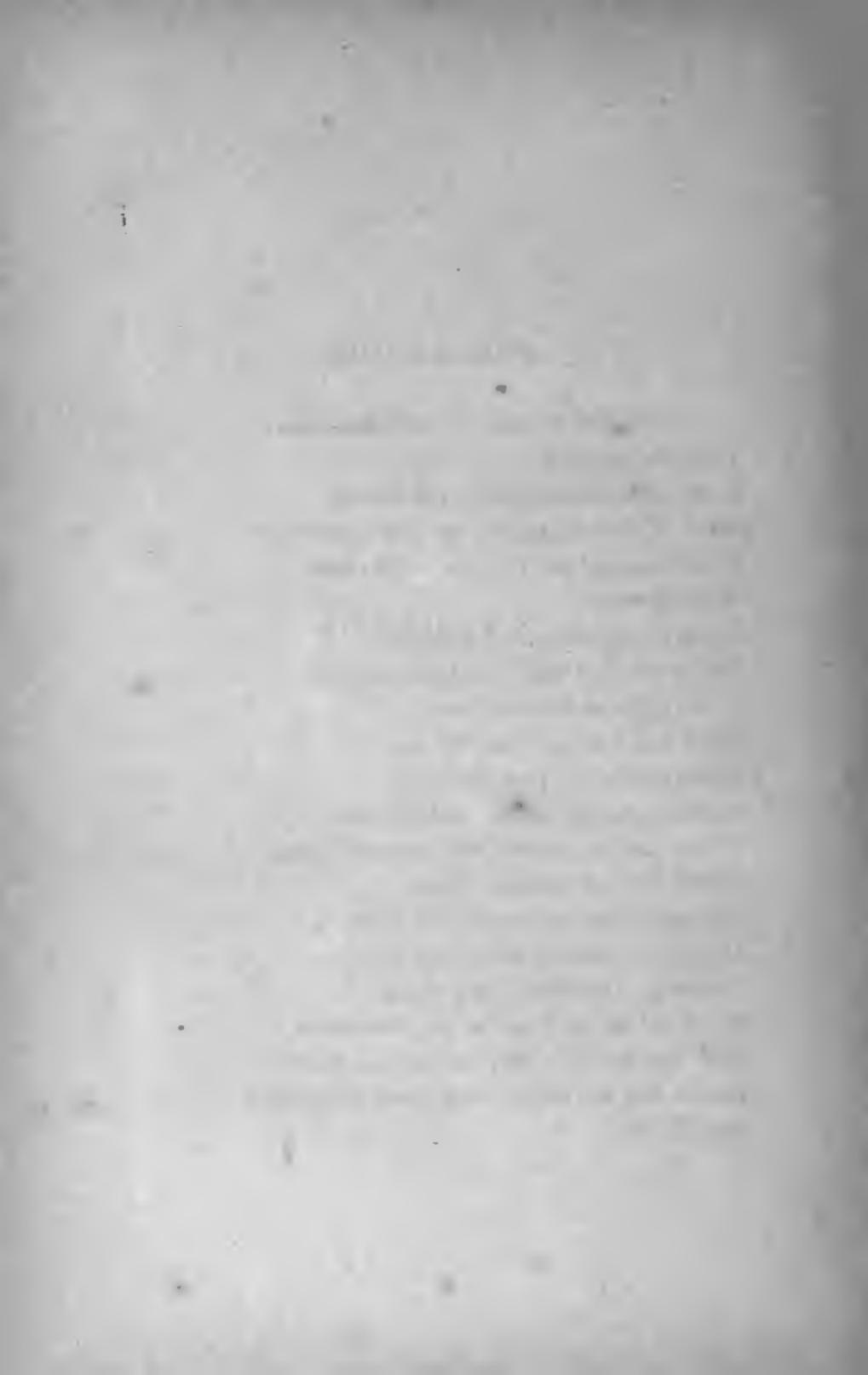
Let in, with no false color caught
From objects round, and broken by naught,
A natural light, clear, open, high,
With shifting blinds to modify,
Contract, or dim it, when he ought.

He paus'd in the centre of the floor
A moment, and slowly gaz'd around
On the various objects and means of art,
Now set aside or piled, that store,
Cold and unsightly, the walls and ground, —
Gaz'd as one who, about to part,
Perhaps for ever,
From those whom he loves with love profound,
Even in the moment when they must sever
Looks in their eyes with eyes that tell
His mournful yearning, — looking, before
His lips can utter it, Farewell :
He paus'd a moment and gaz'd around,
Then, moving straight to his color-box,
Where it stood wheel'd up against the wall,
Touches a spring and the case unlocks.

He took up his pencils, both large and small,
And, one by one,
Without a flutter, without a sigh,
With passionless mien and unmoisten'd eye,
Breaks them in two and lets them fall.
He then, with like manner, drew out the draw'r,

And, as he had with his pencils done,
Broke up his palettes one by one,
And saw them strew the floor,—
Passionless, with unblenching eye,
No bitter smile, no regretful sigh ;
But a witness, had such been standing by,
Might have heard him murmur, in mournful tone,
As the splinter'd fragments touch'd the floor ;
“ She was my genius ; for with her came
The truer art unknown before ;
And for her alone
I car'd to extend or to keep my fame.
I never will touch pencil more.”

C O N C L U S I O N



CONCLUSION

*

'T is a chill wet night in chill December;
The selfsame night
In the selfsame season wet and dreary,
When Walter the painter, we may remember,
Found the poor child in that woful plight,
Wet and weary,
Hungry, half-naked, and all alone,
Sitting crouch'd on the cold door-stone
In the night so wet and dreary.
A tall thin man, prematurely old,
Passes slowly the very street,
Reckless alike of the rain and the cold,
Where, twenty winters now come and gone,
Walter Hervey chanc'd to meet
The hapless outcast, weary and worn,
Hungry, half-naked, weary and worn,
And stopp'd to listen to her moan,
And lifted her up from the wet door-stone,
And, won by her beauty and accents sweet,
Cloth'd her, and shelter'd her, gave her to eat,
Poor forlorn!

On this same night, ever since she died,
On this very night in every year,
Whatever the weather, be it wet or clear,
This man walks out, on the selfsame side
Of the selfsame streets, till late at night,
With lingering step passing to and fro
The same space over and over again,
Thorough the mist or through the rain,
Over the ice or amid the snow,
The same space over and over again,
Till late at night from eventide,
But turning heedfully his sight
With look of anxiousness and pain,
Heedfully on every side,
The sons of misery to note,
Both those who beg and those whom pride
Or modesty or shame makes slow
Their hopeless indigence to plain.
But he gives not now, as in his prime,
A few half-pennies or single groat,
But with bountiful hand from an ample store,
And tells them whither to come for more
At a future time.

Upon this night —— 'T was shivering-chill.
A high north wind in wintry gusts was blowing,
Driving aslant the rain, which sometimes fell
In heavy showers the kennels overflowing,
And only for brief intervals was still

Or drizzling dropp'd : and aye the air was growing
With the cold wind and rain more painful-chill.
Yet the old man, bent more by wo than age,
Pac'd through the storm nor seem'd to heed its rage,
Nor sought his house's shelter to regain,
Though, save an outer coat, not more protected
By the defences others wont to wear
Against the rain,
Than if the atmosphere were frosty clear
And all the stars in heaven were glowing.
Only, his glances now no longer throwing
On either side of him to find the poor,
He stoop'd more, as he walk'd with head dejected,
Thinking perhaps in such a storm in vain
Even houseless wretches wandering would be sought,
Or, likely more,
Absorb'd himself in some deep-brooded thought
Of grief and pain.

On this dismal night, the old man sat down
On the very sill-stone, in the vaulted door
Of the house in the street of the mighty town,
Whereon, the same night twenty years before,
Sat the little wanderer crying.
But not the like cover
The deep recess gave him,
For the wind was not dying
Nor the rain-flood was over.
Aslant it beats into the vaulted door

With a fury unmitigate,
From whose hurt could not save him,
In that posture so situate,
The drench'd outer coat and droop'd hat which he wore.

Yet unshaken, or seeming,
In the kind of day-dreaming
Or stupor of sorrow and memory's pain
In which he was bound,
Unaware of the rain,
He sat there dejected,
On the sparkling flags gazing
And the street-lights reflected
In the plashes around,
Which, flickering and blazing,
Seem'd a little way off burning lamps on the ground,
He sat till the sound
Of footsteps awoke him
From his torpor of gloom,
Then tottering betook him
Chill'd and wet to his home.

There he sits by the fire,
Which he does not replenish,
And whose wavering light,
Which begins to grow less
As the heat to diminish,
Is all he can need in that hour of distress
Or indeed could desire, —

He sits by the fire,
For the time burning bright,
And places a stool or low bench by the grate,
In the corner of the hearth where the wanderer sate,
The same little bench which had serv'd her as seat,
That eventful night.
And this the same room in his old abode.
He has hired it ever since she died,—
And has fitted it up in the very same mode
As when by him first occupied ;
And his joy has been still,
A joy although sad,
To feed the sparrows on the window-sill,
As Alice had ;
Though these are not now the same sparrows, as he
By his sorrows and age, by his sorrows more,
Which have doubled for him the course of time,
Is hardly the man he us'd to be,
With the unbow'd form and that mien he bore
In his prime.

On this vacant bench, without once shifting
His posture, or a moment lifting
His visage upward, he gazes intent.
He feeds not the fire.
As the last coals expire,
The old man, half-crouch'd on the rug by the grate,
Has his arms round the stool where Alice once sate,
His brow resting on it, his face downward bent.

And when the gray light of the morning shining
Into the fireless chamber stream'd
Through the dingy blind and the curtains' fold,
Its ray on the old man's body gleam'd,
In the same bent posture on the hearth-rug reclining,
Stiff and cold.

NOTES



NOTES TO ALICE

1.—Chant the Second. § II. p. 52.

*Lo, in the square of haughty name,
Where stands the hero on his pile,
And stands forlorn,
etc., etc.*

The statue of Lord Nelson in Trafalgar-Square; which as a portrait of that great naval hero is well enough, but as a work of art has called forth many critical sarcasms. One, I remember, characterized it, not unhappily, as *the beau-ideal of a Greenwich Pensioner*.

Alice (as has been seen in the *Advertisement*) was originally intended for publication in London. Hence the language in the text.

2.—Chant the Third. § I. p. 107, sq.

*Now might the fallow-finch beware,
Knew he St. James's day was come:
etc., etc.*

The *Wheat-ear* (*Motacilla ænanthe*,) called also, among other provincial names, the *Fallow-Finch* and *Chack-Bird*, and in Scot-

land the *Chack*, a species of Warbler, one of the many delightful song-birds which England is happy to possess, is caught in great numbers on the South Downs, by a rustic trap made by setting up two tufts, put together in the shape of the letter T with a horse-hair noose on a stick at each end. It is the invincible usage to set these traps on St. James's day,—*July 25th*.

3.—Chant the Third. § III. p. 110.

*When upon his noon tide vision
Broke the image, calm and sweet,
Of the rescued wanderer standing
On that fairest spot, the landing
Where life's river makes division,
Womanhood and childhood meet, —*

In a review of *Virginia*, a critic has attempted to trace a resemblance between a certain familiar figure and one in the *Virginius* of Knowles, a play of which, except in the critic's citation (as given below),* I never redd so much as a line, nor have

* . . . "In one instance Mr. Osborn seems to have borrowed a metaphor from his predecessor. The latter makes Virginius say of [to] the people:

' You helped to put your masters on your backs.
They like their seats and make you show your mettle.
They ride you — sweat you — curb you — lash you, and
You cannot throw them off with all your mettle.'—*Act i. sc. 2.*

"These four lines Mr. Osborn, with characteristic diffuseness [diffusiveness], dilutes [dilates — expands] into fourteen [and makes a simile]:

' ICILIUS log. As the steed,
Broke to the bit, forgets the natural power
Which, us'd, would fling his rider headlong, so
Your mouths are bitted.'

ever seen so much as the titlepage, and of which as represented before me in my youth I recollect but one phrase, because of its association in my mind with the peculiar husky enunciation of Mr. Macready, *Take her, Icilius*, and but one stage-picture, where *Virginius* stands over the body of *Appius* in prison. In the present poem, there is a more serious coincidence of almost an entire verse with one of Mr. Longfellow's, and in a metaphor not familiar. I had seen the piece where this occurs one day about a month since at my publisher's, and was so pleased with the expression that I went home repeating it as one is apt to do a strain of pleasant music, and totally unconscious that I had used the same or nearly the same until I came to revise the third canto of *Alice* for the printer. These are Mr. Longfellow's verses:

“ Standing with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet!”

“ Gazing, with a timid glance,
On the brooklet's swift advance,
On the river's broad expanse ! ”

SECOND CIT. Fy ! we are not brutes.

ICL. The horse is valiant, generous, faithful; why
Shame ye to be his parallel? In the fight
Shrinks he with terror? When the trumpet sounds
His eye darts fire, and his spread nostrils snort.
Yet lo! astride him are the master's limbs.
Ye fight too — for your leaders — whipp'd and curb'd.
'T is habit with you both, which makes this mastery
Seem like a part of you. But let volition
Swell your big muscles to their natural force,
'T is lord and steed no longer.' ”

The Round Table, April 6, 1867.

In the collection in which I find this piece it appears to be comprised in a portion marked "Ballads and other Poems, 1841." This is an earlier date than that of the conception of my poem, and the merit of first invention lies with Mr. Longfellow. But conscious of the originality with me of my own idea and of all its language, I do not feel it to be incumbent on me to recast the whole passage; and I think not even so keen a scrutinizer of originality and palpably able a judge of diction, as the candid Knight of the Round Table, would suppose me capable of the stupid meanness of incorporating into any work of mine so marked a passage from the most widely-read of all American poets. It were easy to avoid this appearance of imitation by substituting from my first MS. the variation,

"And the girl and woman meet."

But then I should be reproached with *borrowing* the idea, notwithstanding the essential difference that is obvious in the metaphor and its suggestion in the two passages.

4.—Chant the Fourth. § IV. 174.

*At the selfsame time, were already come
To Weinheim along the valley from Dromm—*

Dromm or *Tromm*, a mountain of the Odenwald, visited by foot-travelers, whose course thence, through Birkenau to Weinheim, leads them along the most romantic portion of the Birkenauer Valley.

5.—Chant the Fourth. § VII. p. 185.

Old Windeck from his cone-shap'd height —

An old castle on the East. It was known as early as the 12th century.

6.—Chant the Fourth. § XIV. p. 213.

*From the Palsgrave Louis down
To the Elector of that name,
Who, his country seeing in flame
etc., etc.
Sent a challenge, though in vain,
* *
To the ravager Turenne.*

The Marshal, who was rather skilful in compliments (it was the reign of Louis XIV.), returned a vague one, declining by order of his king what he had been unworthy of his command had he accepted. It is not the winning side that may hazard its all upon the fortune of a single throw.

For the rest, it is one of those painful, though not inexplicable contradictions between conduct and character, so common in the eminent lives of history, that justifies here the application of such a term as that in the text to so generous a man and great a commander as was certainly Turenne. But the cruelty of his campaign in the Palatinate is extenuated only by his panegyrical biographers. The Elector-Palatine saw from the windows of his high-placed Castle ("from the top of his Castle of Mannheim," says Voltaire,) two towns and twenty-five villages on fire, and this at a time when open war did not exist between France and the Palatinate.

7.—Chant the Fourth. § XIV. p. 214.

*Siege and fire, and storm and sack,
In one century o'er and o'er,
From De Tilly to Melac,
Till the devilish rage of war*

*Outdid all excesses past,
And the nations stood aghast,
When the Neckar, foul with blood,
Town and tower enkindled saw
(So bade Louis and Louvois)
Flashing on its silver flood,
And an innocent people bore
Outrages before unknown,*

* * *

*Woes to move a heart of stone,
Yet was no forbearance shewn*

* * *

By the bloodhounds of De Lorge.

General Melac (by whom the huge tower, that lies overthrown but not disjointed in the ditch at the right side of the main entrance, was blown up in 1689) outdid Turenne in cruelty, but the Marshal De Lorge, in the Spring of 1693, had the honor of completing or surpassing the savage work of all these leaders, whom the so called rights of war converted, from men of more than average honesty and humanity and persons of high and gentle breeding, into remorseless tyrants if not brutal executioners.* The atrocities recorded against the army of the French general when, by the probably treacherous surrender of

* The Marshal Duke de Lorge, who was nephew of Turenne and trained to arms by that famous general, had some of the latter's virtues, though he was inferior to him in capacity. If we set aside the testimony of St. Simon, who, though never extravagant in eulogy, may yet be thought to have been influenced by his affinity and social relations (St. Simon having married Md'le de Lorge), — and he avows partiality for the Marshal, — there is still elsewhere enough to show that, far from being the monster the Heidelberg devastation would make him, he was really an amiable, upright, and disinterested man.

the commandant Von Heydersdorf, the castle was given up and the town lay at their mercy, find their parallel only in those attributed to the revolted troops in India in the present year. It is to be hoped for the honor of human nature, which on such occasions has rarely much to commend it, that the cruelties in both cases have been exaggerated by the sufferers. Yet the scenes in the Palatinate were such as awakened the amazement and horror of all Christendom.

It is to the instructions of the then Minister Louvois that this unprincipled and remorseless devastation of one of the finest portions of Europe is usually ascribed. But I presume they were sanctioned by the *Great King*, who knew how to choose his servants,—always at least those who best pleased his humor.†

† An opinion substantiated by a very similar sentiment in Voltaire, which, subsequently to the writing of the above note, I found on consulting his *Age of Louis XIV*. After saying that the officers who executed this wicked work were ashamed of having been the instruments of such severities, he adds: “On les rejetait sur le Marquis de Louvois. * * Il avait en effet donné ces conseils ; mais Louis avait été le maître de ne les pas suivre. * * Il signa du fond de son palais de Versailles et au milieu des plaisirs, la destruction de tout un pays, *parce qu'il ne voyait dans cet ordre que son pouvoir et le malheureux droit de la guerre.*”

I have Italicized the last clause in the concluding sentence because it furnishes the true key to what (to some minds) is unintelligible in Louis's conduct, and affords his only exculpation. Men in authority are always to be measured by the extent of the power they exercise and the dominant opinions and political habits of the time in which they flourish. Louis XIV. was unquestionably a great king and, in the sense in which the term is usually applied, was, certain weaknesses even counted, also a great man. He who builds palaces on the ruins of poor men's houses, and robs his neighbor-monarch of a possession at the cost of ten thousand lives of his own subjects, is always a great man, and when he pensions poets who resound his praises and artists who magnify his exploits while multiplying their representation, he

8.—Chant the Fourth. § XIV. p. 215.

*Down to him, the Palatine,
Founder of the ancient line
Whence etc.*

Otto von Wittelsbach.

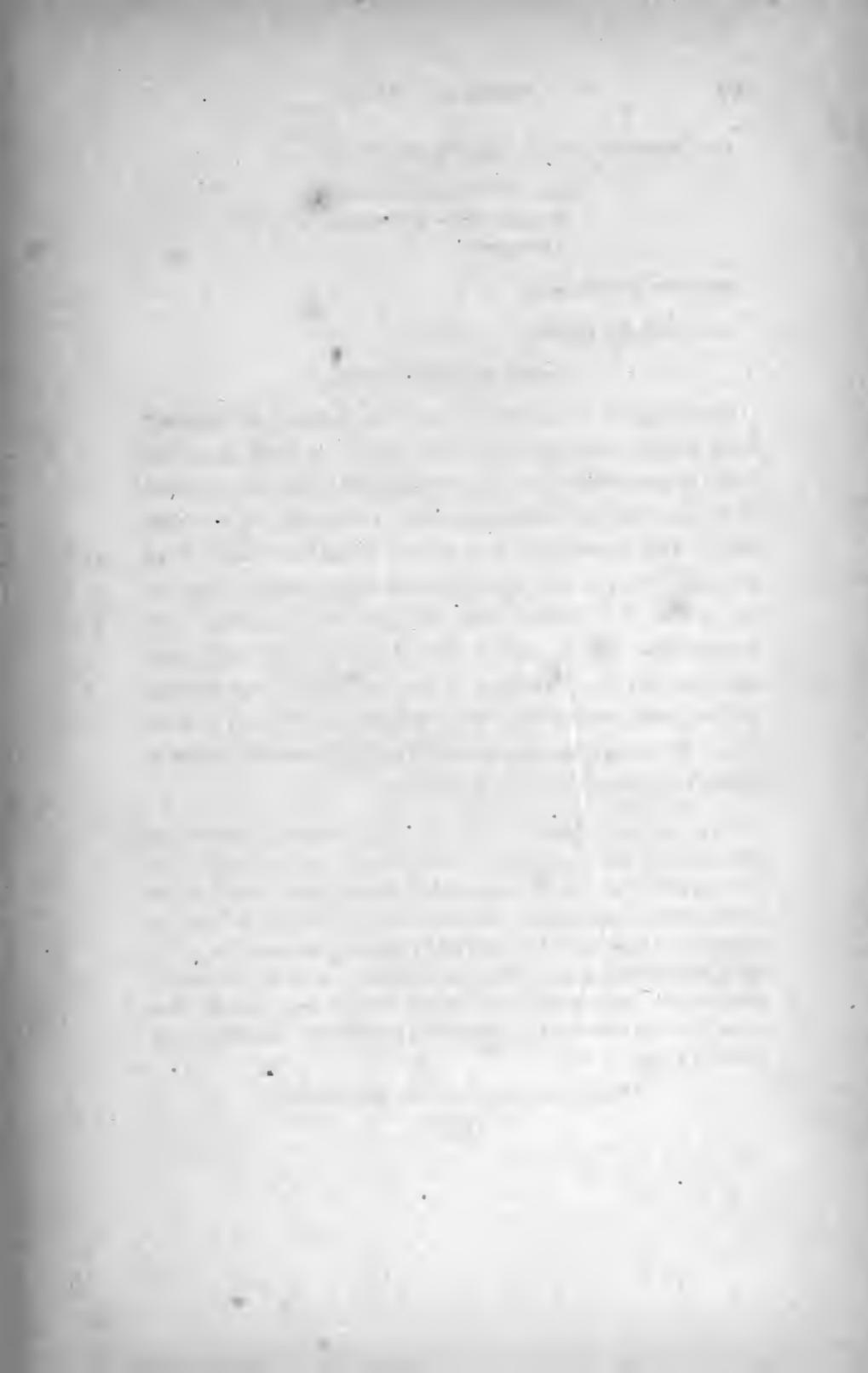
9.—Chant the Fourth. ib.

Ludwig, Bayern's poet-king.

Maximilian II. is however the reigning monarch of Bavaria,* Louis having some years since abdicated in his favor,—greatly it may be presumed to his own advantage, for a king more beloved of his people, late his subjects, more reverenced, is not often found. His follies, it is easy to see, have been those of an impetuous temper and highly nervous organization. They are still talked of in Munich, but no longer with a frown. Art idolizes him; and it may be said of him (though with some allowance for the literalness of the phrase) as of Augustus, that he found his capital of brick and will have left it of marble,—though at what expense of his people's material welfare it hardly becomes a republican to inquire.

is held a patron of letters and the arts. The feeble cries of misery, the sobs of the widow and the orphan are not heard amid the jubilant acclaim of a triumph, and the blaze of an illuminated city throws into the shadow of forgetfulness the conflagration of towns and villages even while their ashes yet smoulder. It is the inevitable result, not of human prejudices or of perpetuated traditional errors, but of human organization, which renders and ever will render the manly qualities of force and courage more admirable than sober household virtues and the wisdom that provides for the internal prosperity of a state.

* Was, at the date of the note. Now, deceased.







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